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Philip Hemery Le Breton.

Let Dr Priestley be confuted when he
is mistaken, let him be exposed
when he is superficial, let him be
repulsed when he is dogmatical,
let him be rebuked when he is
censorious; but let not his
attainments be depreciated, becau
they are numerous, almost
without a parallel; let not his
talents be ridiculed, because they
are superlatively great; let not
his morals be vilified, because
they are correct without austerity
and exemplary without ostentation
because they present even to
common observers, the innocence
of a hermit and the simplicity
of a Patriarch; and because a
philosophic eye will at once
discover in them, the deep-fixe
root of virtuous principle and t
solid trunk of virtuous habit

Dr Parr

TRACTS

IN CONTROVERSY WITH

BISHOP HORSLEY,

By JOSEPH PRIESTLEY, LL.D. F.R.S.

AC. IMP. PETROP. R. PARIS. HOLM. TAURIN. ITAL. HARLEM. AUREL. MED. PARIS. CANTAB. AMERIC. ET PHILAD. SOCIUS.

WITH NOTES BY THE EDITOR.

TO WHICH IS ANNEXED,

AN APPENDIX,

CONTAINING

A REVIEW OF THE CONTROVERSY,

IN FOUR LETTERS TO THE BISHOPS, BY THE SAME AUTHOR,

NEVER BEFORE PUBLISHED.

LONDON:

PRINTED BY RICHARD AND ARTHUR TAYLOR, SHOE LANE,

FOR THE LONDON UNITARIAN SOCIETY;

AND SOLD BY J. JOHNSON AND CO., ST. PAUL'S CHURCHYARD,

AND D. EATON, HOLBORN.

1815.

duced the Editor of this publication to annex in an Appendix to the first part of his Calm Inquiry into the Scripture Doctrine concerning the Person of Christ, a brief review of the controversy between Dr. Priestley and Dr. Horsley, in order to show how little foundation there was for the bishop's partisans to boast of their chieftain's triumph, and how manifestly and decidedly in all material points victory had declared herself on the side of Dr. Priestley.

The reverend Heneage Horsley, Prebendary of St. Asaph, and son of the late bishop, piously solicitous for his father's reputation, with more zeal than discretion stepped forward to resist the attempt of the Calm Inquirer to rectify the judgement of the public, and republished his Father's Tracts, with an adulatory Dedication to the Prince Regent, an acrimonious Introduction bitterly inveighing against the Unitarians, and a laboured Appendix, in which, to the best of his ability, he endeavours to falsify the representation

and to invalidate the arguments of the Calm Inquirer. The reverend Prebendary, though not deficient in parts and learning, was totally unacquainted with the subject upon which he professed to write: and the principal advantage resulting from this publication was, that it gave occasion to the Calm Inquirer to restate the claims of Dr. Priestley to victory in his controversy with Bishop Horsley, and to place them in a light which it is presumed cannot fail to satisfy every impartial judge.

As this defence of Dr. Priestley in some degree revived the attention of the public to the subject, it was thought desirable by many of the friends of freedom of inquiry, and particularly by the admirers of Dr. Priestley, that this learned and able champion of the primitive faith should be allowed an opportunity of pleading his own cause by the republication of his Tracts in controversy with Dr. Horsley, that so, those readers who interested themselves in the question, might be supplied with the means of judging for themselves, to which of

the learned champions the palm of victory belongs. And as it was not to be expected that a work of this nature should command a very extensive sale, it was thought advisable that it should be taken upon the Catalogue of the London Unitarian Society.

To this publication are annexed four out of six of the Letters addressed to the Bishops by Dr. Priestley, and which were left by the learned author with the present editor, to be published or suppressed at his discretion. And had it not been for this revival of the controversy they would probably never have seen the light. All the letters which have any bearing upon the present controversy are published in this volume. The second Letter contains Dr. Priestley's own abstract of the state in which the controversy was left when Bishop Horsley ceased to write; and supersedes the abstract which the editor had proposed to prefix to Dr. Priestley's Tracts. The third letter has no immediate relation to the controversy with Dr. Horsley, but contains Dr. Priestley's last thoughts upon his

controversies with Mr. Howes, Dr. Horne, Dr. Barnard, Dr. Geddes, Mr. Hawkins, and Dr. Davies, which cannot fail to be acceptable to many readers. The two unpublished letters were written at an early period of the French revolution, and refer to a state of things which is long since past, and the revival of which would by no means tend to promote that spirit of conciliation which it is now the wish of every good man to cherish and encourage. Dr. Priestley particularly expostulates with the bishops of that day upon the subject of a clause which was understood to be proposed by them to be introduced into the Catholic bill, to exclude the impugners of the doctrine of the Trinity from the benefit of the Toleration. Happily, we live in better times; and have been witnesses to the repeal of those barbarous laws which were a disgrace to the statute book; which inflicted pains and penalties horrible to think of upon the conscientious worshipers of the one God, the Father only; which repeal was sanctioned by the unanimous deci-

sion of the legislature, with the approbation of all good men, and without a single dissentient voice from the right reverend Bench. Though it is equally wonderful and lamentable to think that one of the learned prelates has since disgraced himself and his order, by calling upon the legislature to re-enact these inhuman statutes. But, fortunately, though in this enlightened age the bench of bishops exhibits the singular phænomenon of a Bonner, the throne of Britain is no longer occupied by a Tudor or a Stuart. We can now smile at the busy impotence of a bigotry which, in a former age, would have caused our pious ancestors to tremble.

T. BELSHAM.

Essex House,
December 4, 1814.

CONTENTS OF PART I.

LETTERS TO DR. HORSLEY, ARCHDEACON OF ST. ALBAN'S.

Preface - - - - Page iii
An Introductory Letter - - - 15

LETTER I.

Of the argument from the writings of the Apostles and the apostolical Fathers - - 20

LETTER II.

Of the distinction between the Ebionites and the Nazarenes - - - - - - 26

LETTER III.

That the primitive Unitarians were not considered as heretics - - - - - 35

LETTER IV.

Of the inference that may be drawn from the passage of Athanasius, concerning the opinion of the early Jewish Christians relating to Christ - - - - - - 45

LETTER V.

An argument for the late origin of the doctrine of the divinity of Christ, from the difficulty of tracing the time in which it was first divulged - - - - - - 60

LETTER VI.

Of the personification of the Logos - - 68

LETTER VII.

Considerations relating to the doctrine of the Trinity - - - - - 77

LETTER VIII.

Miscellaneous articles - - - 99

The Concluding Letter - - - 105

POSTSCRIPT.

I. *Passages from Origen, referred to, p.* 30, 31, - - - - 111
II. *Of Heresy in early times* - - 112
III. *Of the conduct of the Apostles* - 114
IV. *Of the excommunication of Theodotus by Victor* - - - - 115
V. *Of Justin Martyr's account of the knowledge of some christians of low rank* 118
VI. *Of the passage in Justin Martyr concerning the Unitarians of his time* - 120
VII. *Of the first author of the doctrine of the permanent personality of the Logos* - 126
VIII. *Maxims of historical criticism* - 127
IX. *A summary view of the evidence for the primitive christians having held the doctrine of the simple humanity of Christ* 131

APPENDIX.

Extract of a Letter from a Friend - - 139

CONTENTS OF PART II.

LETTERS TO DR. HORSLEY, ARCHDEACON OF ST. ALBAN'S.

Preface - - - - - 148

A catalogue of the principal ecclesiastical writers, &c. after the apostolic age, with the time when they flourished, chiefly from Cave's Historia Literaria - - - - 159

The different opinions of Dr. Horsley and Dr. Priestley briefly stated - - - 162

LETTER I.

Introduction - - - - 167

LETTER II.

Of the doctrine of the first ages concerning the person of Christ - - - 171

LETTER III.

Of the Nazarenes and Ebionites - - 178

LETTER IV.

Of the supposed orthodox Jewish church at Jerusalem, and of the veracity of Origen - - 196

LETTER V.

Of heresy in the earliest times - - 205

LETTER VI.

Of the sentiments of Justin Martyr, Irenæus, and Clemens Alexandrinus, concerning heresy 211

LETTER VII.

Of the state of heresy in the time of Tertullian 217

LETTER VIII.

Of Origen's idea of heresy - - - 226

LETTER IX.

Of the light in which the Unitarians were considered in later ages, and of the state of the common people at all times - - 232

LETTER X.

Of the quotation from Athanasius - - 240

LETTER XI.

Of the time when Christ began to be considered as God, and the opinion of the ancient and modern Jews with respect to the Messiah - 251

LETTER XII.

Of the personification of the Logos - - 268

LETTER XIII.

Considerations relating to the doctrine of the Trinity - - - - - 276

LETTER XIV.

Of prayer to Christ - - - 292

LETTER XV.

Of the unitarian principles with respect to Mahometanism and infidelity - - 297

LETTER XVI.

Of Bishop Bull's defence of damnatory clauses 305

LETTER XVII.

Of the light in which the Dissenters are considered by the Archdeacon of St. Alban's, and of the penalties to which the Unitarians among them are subject - - - - - 310

LETTER XVIII.

Of the charge of wilful misrepresentation, &c. 318

LETTER XIX.

Miscellaneous articles, and the Conclusion - 324

APPENDIX *to Letter VIII. relating to the argument for the* novelty *of the doctrine of the Trinity, from the* alarm *that it gave to the common people* - - - - 337

CONTENTS OF PART III.

LETTERS TO DR. HORSLEY, ARCHDEACON OF ST. ALBAN'S.

Preface - - - - 347

An Introductory Letter - - - 349

LETTER I.

Of the veracity of Origen - - - 350

LETTER II.

General observations relating to the supposed orthodox church of Jewish christians at Jerusalem after the time of Adrian - - 361

LETTER III.

Of the testimony of Epiphanius to the existence of a church of orthodox Jewish christians at Jerusalem after the time of Adrian - 365

LETTER IV.

Of the evidence from Jerom in favour of the existence of a church of orthodox Jewish christians at Jerusalem after the time of Adrian 369

LETTER V.

Of the miraculous conception - - 377

LETTER VI.

Miscellaneous articles - - - - 380

CONTENTS OF PART IV.

LETTERS TO DR. HORSLEY, LORD BISHOP OF ST. DAVID'S.

Preface - - - - 397

LETTER I.

Of his Lordship's avowed object to depretiate his antagonist - - - - 403

LETTER II.

Of the charge of want of candour in Dr. Priestley - - - - - 410

LETTER III.

Of the charge of borrowing from Zuicker - 416

LETTER IV.

Of the damnatory clause in the Athanasian creed 419

LETTER V.

Of the phrase, Coming in the Flesh - - 423

LETTER VI.

Of the meaning of the word Idiota *in Tertullian* 426

LETTER VII.

Of heretics, according to Irenæus - - 429

LETTER VIII.

Of the origin of the Son from the Father's contemplation of his own perfections - - 432

LETTER IX.

Of the church of orthodox Jewish christians at Jerusalem, and of the veracity of Origen 442

LETTER X.

The Conclusion - - - - 452

APPENDIX,

CONTAINING

LETTERS TO THE BISHOPS UPON THE SUBJECT OF THE CONTROVERSY WITH DR. HORSLEY.

LETTER I.

Of the nature and importance of the late controversy concerning the doctrine of the Trinity 467

LETTER II.

A review of the controversy with the Bishop of St. David's - - - - 472

LETTER III.

A general view of what has been done by other writers in this controversy in defence of the doctrine of the Trinity - - - 483

LETTER IV.

Of subscription, and a proposal for a change in the forms of public worship - - 487

LETTERS

TO

DR. HORSLEY,

IN ANSWER TO HIS

ANIMADVERSIONS

ON THE

HISTORY OF THE CORRUPTIONS OF CHRISTIANITY.

WITH

ADDITIONAL EVIDENCE

THAT

THE PRIMITIVE CHRISTIAN CHURCH WAS UNITARIAN.

BY JOSEPH PRIESTLEY, LL.D. F.R.S.

Let not him that girdeth on his harness boast himself as he that putteth it off. 1 KINGS xx. 11.

PREFACE.

My design in writing the History of the Corruptions of Christianity, it will easily be perceived, was to compose a work proper for the use of all christians, learned and unlearned, and indeed chiefly the latter. Also, having an extensive object before me, I did not give much more attention to one part of the scheme than to another. On these accounts I avoided all unnecessary quotations from original writers in the languages in which they wrote, especially in Greek, which I had great difficulty in getting printed; but I gave some passages that were of particular value, and in Latin, and distinctly referred to as many others as I had actually made use of myself; making a point of referring to none, at first or second hand, of which I saw any reason to doubt.

It has happened that hitherto the first article in my work, viz. The History of Opinions concerning Christ, has attracted the more particular notice of critics, which has led me to study this subject more than I should otherwise have done; and I think it will probably engage my attention some time longer. Indeed, as the question is of particular importance, I think it right to take every method in my power to invite and promote the fullest discussion of it. With this view, I replied to some remarks of a writer in The Monthly Review, which, though not in the least affecting my principal argument, gave me an opportunity to add some new illustrations.

Dr. Horsley's Charge to his Clergy has afforded me another opportunity of re-examining the subject; and the result, which is now before the reader, has been, as I think, a further illustration and a stronger confirmation of my original position, viz. that the belief that Christ was a mere man, naturally possessed of no other powers than other men have, but a distinguished messenger of God, and the chief instrument in his hands for the good of men, was the original faith of the christian church, consisting both of Jews and Gentiles.

This controversy, I hope, will continue, either with Dr. Horsley or some other person. Nothing, however, shall be wanting on my part to keep it up, so long as any new light shall appear to be thrown upon the question in debate; and after this I intend to compose an entire work on this subject only; stating, in as clear a light as I shall be able, the evidence of the above important truth (for such I cannot help considering it) as it shall then appear to me, with all the proper authorities in the original languages, and leave it to make whatever impression it may on the minds of others, having then done my duty with respect to it.

In the mean time, I am by no means sanguine in my expectations from the effect of the most forcible arguments, on the minds of those who are at present indisposed to receive the opinion that I contend for, in consequence of strong early prejudices in favour of a different one; prejudices which have been confirmed by much reading, thinking, and conversation, especially if those who are influenced by them be advanced in life. It is happy for the cause of truth, as well as other valuable purposes, that man is mortal; and that while the species continues, the individuals go off the

stage. For otherwise the whole species would soon arrive at its *maximum* in all improvements, as individuals now do.

If any person ought to have candour for others in this respect, I ought; having had abundant experience of the difficulty with which deep-rooted prejudices give way to the strongest evidence, even when the mind is naturally active, and the attention is constantly kept in a state of inquiry. On this account, a short history of the progress of my own thoughts with respect to this subject may be useful. To myself the reflection upon it is highly so, at the same time that it is not a little humbling.

Having been educated in the strictest principles of Calvinism, and having from my early years had a serious turn of mind, promoted no doubt by a weak and sickly constitution, I was very sincere and zealous in my belief of the doctrine of the trinity; and this continued till I was about nineteen; and then I was as much shocked on hearing of any who denied the divinity of Christ (thinking it to be nothing less than impiety and blasphemy) as any of my opponents can be now. I therefore truly feel for them, and most sincerely excuse them.

About the age of twenty, being then in a regular course of theological studies, I saw reason to change my opinion, and became an Arian; and notwithstanding what appeared to me a fair and impartial study of the scriptures, and though I had no bias on my mind arising from subscribed creeds, and confessions of faith, &c. I continued in that persuasion fifteen or sixteen years; and yet in that time I was well acquainted with Dr. Lardner, Dr. Fleming, and several other zealous

Socinians, especially my friend Mr. Graham. The first theological tract of mine (which was on the doctrine of atonement) was published at the particular request and under the direction of Dr. Lardner; and he approving of the scheme which I had then formed, of giving a short view (which was all that I had then thought of) of the progress of the corruptions of christianity, gave me a few hints with respect to it. But still I continued till after his death indisposed to the Socinian hypothesis. After this, continuing my study of the scriptures, with the help of his Letters on the Logos, I at length changed my opinion, and became what is called a Socinian; and in this I see continually more reason to acquiesce, though it was a long time before the arguments in favour of it did more than barely preponderate in my mind. For the arguments which had the principal weight with me at that time, and particularly those texts of scripture which so long retarded my change of opinion, I refer my readers to The Theological Repository, vol. iii. p. 345.

I was greatly confirmed in this doctrine after I was fully satisfied that man is of an uniform composition, and wholly mortal; and that the doctrine of a separate immaterial soul, capable of sensation and action when the body is in the grave, is a notion borrowed from heathen philosophy, and unknown to the scriptures. Of this I had for a long time a mere *suspicion*; but having casually mentioned it as such, and a violent outcry being raised against me on that account, I was induced to give the greatest attention to the question, to examine it in every light, and to invite the fullest discussion of it. This terminated in as full a conviction with respect to this subject as I have with respect

to any other whatever. The reasons on which that conviction is founded may be seen in my Disquisitions on Matter and Spirit, of which I have lately published a new and improved edition.

Being now fully persuaded that Christ was a man like ourselves, and consequently that his pre-existence, as well as that of other men, was a notion that had no foundation in reason or in the scriptures; and having been gradually led (in consequence of wishing to trace the principal corruptions of christianity) to give particular attention to ecclesiastical history, I could not help thinking but that (since the doctrine of the pre-existence of Christ was not the doctrine of the scriptures, and therefore could not have been taught by the apostles,) there must be some traces of the rise and progress of the doctrine of the trinity, and some historical evidence that *unitarianism* was the general faith of christians in the apostolical age, independent of the evidence which arose from its being the doctrine of the scriptures.

In this state of mind, the reader will easily perceive that I naturally expected to find, what I was previously well persuaded *was to be found*; and in time I collected much more evidence than I at first expected, considering the early rise, and the long and universal spread, of what I deem to be a radical corruption of the genuine christian doctrine. This evidence I have fairly laid before the reader. He must judge of the weight of it, and also make whatever allowance he may think necessary for my particular situation and prejudices.

I am well aware that it is naturally impossible that the evidence I have produced should impress the minds of those who are Arians or Athanasians, as it will those

of Socinians; nor are men to be convinced of the proper humanity of Christ, by arguments of this kind. They must begin, as I did, with the study of the scriptures; and whatever be the result of that study, it will be impossible for them, let them discipline their minds as they will, not to be influenced in the historical inquiry, as I was, by their previous persuasion concerning the subject of it. If, however, they should be so far impressed with the historical arguments, as to think it probable that the christian church was, in a very early period, unitarian; it will, no doubt, lead them to expect that they shall find the doctrine of the scriptures, truly interpreted, to be so too.

With respect to myself, I do not know that I can do any thing more. Being persuaded, as I am, from the study of the scriptures, that Christ is properly a man, I cannot cease to think so; nor can I possibly help the influence of that persuasion in my historical researches. Let other persons write as freely on their respective hypotheses as I have done on mine; and then indifferent persons, and especially younger persons, whose minds have not acquired the stiffness of ours, who are turned fifty, may derive benefit from it.

Firm as my persuasion now is concerning the proper humanity of Christ, (a persuasion that has been the slow growth of years, and the result of much anxious and patient thinking,) I do not know that, in the course of my inquiry, I have been under the influence of *prejudice* more than all other men naturally are. As to *reputation*, a man may distinguish himself just as much by the defence of old systems, as by the erection of new ones; but I have neither formed any new systems, nor have I particularly distinguished myself in the de-

fence of old ones. When I first became an Arian, and afterwards a Socinian, I was only a convert, in company with many others; and was far from having any thoughts of troubling the world with publications on the subject. This I have been led to do by a series of events, of which I had no foresight, and of which I do not see the issue.

The conclusion that I have formed, with respect to the subject of this work, and my exertions in support of it, are, however, constantly ascribed by my opponents to a force of prejudice and prepossession, so strong as to pervert my judgment in the plainest of all cases. Of this I may not be a proper judge; but analogy may be some guide to myself as well as to others in this case.

Now, what appears to have been my disposition in other similar cases? Have I been particularly attached to *hypotheses* in philosophy, even to my own, which always create a stronger attachment than those of other persons? On the contrary, I will venture to say that no person is generally thought to be less so; nor has it been imagined that my pursuits have been at all defeated, or injured, by any prepossession in favour of particular theories; and yet theories are as apt to mislead in philosophical as in any other subjects. I have always shown the greatest readiness to abandon any hypothesis that I have advanced, and even defended while I thought it defensible, the moment I have suspected it to be ill founded, whether the new facts that have refuted it were discovered by myself or others. My friends in general have blamed me for my extreme facility in this respect. And if I may judge of myself by my own feelings, after the closest examination that

I can give myself, I am just the same with respect to theology.

In the course of my life I have held and defended opinions very different from those which I hold at present. Now, if my obstinacy in retaining and defending opinions had been so great as my opponents represent it, why did it not long ago put a stop to all my changes, and fix me a Trinitarian, or an Arian? Let those who have given stronger proofs of their minds being open to conviction than mine has been, throw the first stone at me.

I am well aware of the nature and force of that opposition and obloquy to which I am exposing myself in consequence of writing my History of the Corruptions of Christianity, the most valuable, I trust, of all my publications; and especially in consequence of the pains that have been taken to magnify and expose a few inaccuracies, to which all works of a similar nature have been and ever must be subject. But I have the fullest persuasion that the real oversights in it are of the smallest magnitude, and do not at all affect any one position or argument in my work, as I hope to satisfy all candid judges; and as to mere cavil and reproach, I thank God, I am well able to bear it.

The odium I brought upon myself by maintaining the doctrines of *materialism* and *necessity*, without attempting to cover or soften terms of so frightful a sound, and without palliating any of their consequences, was unspeakably greater than what this business can bring upon me. At the beginning of that controversy I had few, very few indeed, of my nearest friends, who were with me in the argument. They however who knew me, knew my motives, and ex-

cused me; but the christian world in general regarded me with the greatest abhorrence. I was considered as an unprincipled infidel, either an atheist or in league with atheists. In this light I was repeatedly exhibited in all the public papers; and The Monthly Review, and other Reviews, with all the similar publications of the day, joined in the popular cry. But a few years have seen the end of it. At least all that is left would not disturb the merest novice in these things. The consequence (which I now enjoy) is a great increase of materialists; not of atheistical ones, as some will still represent it, but of the most serious, the most rational, and consistent christians.

A similar issue I firmly expect from the present controversy, unpromising as it may appear in the eyes of some, who are struck with what is speciously and confidently urged. For my own part, I truly rejoice in the present appearance of things; as I foresee that much good will arise from the attention that will by this means be drawn upon the subject; and as I hope I respect the hand of God in every thing, I thank him for leading me into this business; as I hope to have occasion to thank him, some years hence, for leading me through it, and with as much advantage as I have been led through the other.

It is, indeed, my firm, and it is my joyful persuasion, that there is a wise Providence overruling all inquiries, as well as other events. The wisdom of God has appeared, as I have endeavoured to point out, even in the corruptions of christianity, and the spread of error; and it is equally conspicuous in the discovery and propagation of truth.

I am far from thinking that that great Being who superintends all things, guides my pen any more than

he does that of my fiercest opponent; but I believe that by means of our joint labours, and those of all who engage in theological controversy (which is eminently useful in rousing men to the utmost exertion of their faculties), he is promoting his own excellent purposes, and providing for the prevalence of truth, *in his own due time*; and in this general prospect we ought all equally to rejoice.

It becomes us, however, to consider, that they only will be entitled to praise, who join in carrying on the designs of providence with *right views of their own*; who are actuated by a real love of truth, and also by that candour and benevolence, which a sense of our common difficulties in the investigation of truth most effectually inspires. A man who has never changed an opinion cannot have much feeling of this difficulty, and therefore cannot be expected to have much candour, unless his disposition be uncommonly excellent. I ought to have more candour than many others, because I have felt more than many can pretend to have done, the force of those obstacles which retard our progress in the search of truth.

With much tranquillity, a tranquillity acquired by habit, but more approaching to a pleasing alacrity, than to any uneasy apprehension, I shall wait the issue of the present controversy; freely retracting whatever I shall be found to have advanced with too little consideration; moderating any thing on which I shall appear to have laid too much stress, and urging with the greatest freedom every new argument or illustration that may occur to me, till I shall have nothing of consequence to allege. After this I shall no longer reply to particular opponents, but content myself with making such *corrections* and *improvements* either in my

History, or my intended View of the Doctrine of the first Ages of the Christian Church, concerning the Person of Christ, as I may see necessary; submitting every thing to the judgment of those who may think proper to give any attention to the subject.

I cannot conclude this preface without cautioning our readers not to imagine that this is a mere trial of skill between me and my opponents. It is the opening of a serious and important controversy, tending to decide whether the christian church in the age of the apostles was unitarian or trinitarian; which, independently of any arguments from particular texts of scripture, will assist us to determine whether the doctrine of the trinity, which has had so long possession of the minds of the christian world, be a real doctrine of christianity, or one of its oldest and worst corruptions.

I wish to draw out the ablest men, both on the trinitarian and the Arian side of the question; and I hope that I shall not long be the *principal* on the proper unitarian side. My Vindicator is much better qualified to take this place, and leave me that of *auxiliary*.

I would further observe, that in a controversy so various and extensive as this will probably be, it should not be imagined that the question is absolutely decided when any particular advantage is gained on either side. All men are liable to oversights; but a judicious reader will consider the extent and consequences of an oversight, and particularly whether it affects the question itself, or the writer only.

Especially, let not persons who are not themselves much conversant in ecclesiastical history, conclude that when any writer has gained a *seeming* advantage, it is therefore a *real* and *final* one; but let them wait till

his opponent has been heard. On the first appearance of Dr. Horsley's Charge, many persons considered it as decisive against me. Others may now think as favourably of my side of the argument. But let all persons suspend their judgment till they see that we have nothing of consequence to allege further, and let a reasonable time be given to each of us.

To the Letters to Dr. Horsley I have subjoined a Postscript of supplemental and miscellaneous matters; and especially a *summary view* of all the evidence that I have hitherto been able to collect, and *maxims of historical criticism*, with which the several articles may be compared. I wish that my opponents would take the same or any similar method, in order to bring the controversy to a more easy, speedy, and satisfactory termination.

I have likewise added some notice of the writer in The Monthly Review for September last, which contains a large answer to my reply to his former animadversions. It was certainly improper for a person who assumes the character of a *judge* to become a *party* in the dispute. With the intentions that he avows, of drawing me into a controversy, he ought to have left his former province of *reviewer* to another; and not to have availed himself of the prodigious advantage of the cheap and immense circulation which the Review gave him. As Dr. Horsley considers this writer (p. 77) as *learned in ecclesiastical history*, and may wish to have him for an ally, let him not, like Commodus, throw his darts from a *stage*; but if he have any confidence in his own prowess, (of which he seems to have no distrust,) let him, masked or unmasked, descend into the *arena* along with us.

AN INTRODUCTORY LETTER.

DEAR SIR,

As it is my earnest wish that every subject of importance may be fully investigated, I am happy to find that you have done me the honour to animadvert on my History of the Corruptions of Christianity, in your late Charge to the Clergy, at St. Alban's, as you formerly did on my Treatise on Philosophical Necessity, in a Sermon. I was in hopes that my reply to the latter would have led you to pursue the argument with me to its proper termination. But though I failed in my attempts to engage your assistance in that inquiry, I flatter myself that I shall be more successful in this; especially as, by the temper and style of your performance, you seem to interest yourself more deeply in this subject, imagining, no doubt, and very justly, that much more depends upon it.

You have given, however, a degree of importance to my work which, I own, I had not thought of myself, when you say to your reverend brethren, p. 5, "You will easily conjecture that what has led me to these reflections, is the extraordinary attempt which has lately been made to unsettle the faith, and to break up the constitution, of every ecclesiastical establishment in Christendom. Such is the avowed object of a recent publication, which bears the title of A History of the Corruptions of Christianity, among which the Catholic doctrine of the trinity holds a principal place."

Now I see nothing so very extraordinary in my at-

tempt. I have only done what has been done by every other person who has endeavoured to refute the doctrine of the trinity, or any other essential article of established churches. However, as you seem to have taken so particular an alarm in this case, I am willing to hope you will exert yourself with proportionable vigour; when, in your apprehension, it is no less than *to save a falling state*. Before I enter upon the subject itself, I must endeavour to set you right with respect to two preliminary circumstances.

Whether it be to my credit or not, I must observe that you make my reading to be more extensive than it is, when you suppose me to have borrowed my principal arguments from D. Zwicker or Episcopius. I do assure you, Sir, I do not recollect that I ever met with the name of Zwicker before I saw it in this publication of yours. For Episcopius I have the highest reverence; and I thank you for informing me that, though an Arian himself, he was convinced that the Christian church was originally what is now called Socinian.

On the other hand, by your recommending Bishop Bull's Defence of the Nicene Faith so very strongly, and not mentioning any other modern writers, you seem to have overlooked, or to have undervalued, several works which may certainly be very useful to those who wish to form an impartial judgment on the subject of this controversy; especially Whitby's *Disquisitiones Modestæ*, in answer to Bishop Bull, and his Replies to Waterland, with several pieces in the Socinian Tracts, in three small volumes 4to. But I am more particularly surprised that you should not have mentioned Dr. Clarke's celebrated Treatise on the Trinity, which is calculated to be of the greatest use to

those who would study this subject; containing all the texts that relate to it most advantageously arranged for the purpose, together with some very useful references to the christian fathers. There are several parts of that work which I would take the liberty to recommend to your own particular attention.

You charge me with *arguing in a circle*, saying, p. 12, "It is the professed object of his undertaking to exhibit a view of the gradual changes of opinions, in order to ascertain the faith of the first ages. And he would ascertain the faith of the first ages in order to settle the sense of the scriptures in disputed points. He is therefore not at liberty to assume any sense of the scriptures, which, because it is his own, he may be pleased to call the clear sense, for a proof that the original faith was such as would confirm the sense he wishes to establish."

"So long," you say, "as the sixth page of the first volume of Dr. Priestley's History shall be extant, the masters of the dialectic art will be at no loss for an example of the circulating syllogism." But unless they be provided with one already, you must look out for them elsewhere, as this you have now pitched upon will not answer their purpose, if they be really masters of the dialectic art.

Had I produced no other proof of the unitarianism of the *scriptures* besides that of the *primitive church*, and also no other proof of the unitarianism of the primitive church, besides that of the scriptures, I should have argued in a circle. But you will find that I have been far from doing this.

Is it not usual with all writers who wish to prove *two things*, which mutually prove each other, to ob-

serve that they *do* prove each other; and therefore, that whatever evidence can be alleged for either of them is fully in point with respect to the other? Now this is all that I have done with respect to the unitarianism of the scriptures, and of the primitive church, which prove each other; only that, in my History, I do not profess to enter into the separate proof of the unitarian doctrine from the scriptures.

This I there take for granted had been sufficiently done already by myself and others; and I therefore proceed to prove the unitarianism of the primitive church from *independent evidence*; only observing that the unitarian doctrine having been taught by the apostles is likewise a proof of the same thing. But this I could not suppose would have any weight with those who are trinitarians, though it was not improper to mention it with respect to others with whom it would have weight.

I might have urged another kind of argument against both the divinity and the pre-existence of Christ, viz. from the doctrine of the materiality of man, which I presume has been sufficiently proved in my Disquisitions on Matter and Spirit. I maintain that there is no more reason why *a man* should be supposed to have an immaterial principle within him, than that a *dog*, a *plant*, or a *magnet*, should have one; because, in all these cases, there is just the same difficulty in imagining any connexion between the visible matter of which they consist, and the invisible powers of which they are possessed. If *universal concomitance* be the foundation of all our reasoning concerning causes and effects, the organized brain of a man must be deemed to be the proper seat and immediate cause of his sensation

and thinking, as much as the inward structure of a magnet, whatever that be, is the cause of its power of attracting iron.

This is a very short and plain argument, perfectly consonant to all our reasoning in philosophy; and it is conclusive against the doctrine of a soul, and consequently against the whole system of pre-existence. If then Peter, James, and John had no pre-existent state, it must be contrary to all analogy to suppose Jesus to have pre-existed. His being a prophet, and having a power of working miracles, can make no just exception in his favour; for then every preceding prophet must have pre-existed.

I think I have also proved in my Disquisitions, that the doctrine of a *soul*, as a substance distinct from the body, and capable of being happy or miserable when the body is in the grave, was borrowed from pagan philosophy, is totally repugnant to the system of revelation, and unknown in the scriptures; which speak of no reward for the righteous, or punishment for the wicked, before the general resurrection, and the coming of Christ to judge the world.

I might therefore have urged that, since the doctrine of Christ's pre-existence is contrary to reason, and was never taught by Christ or his apostles, it could not have been the faith of their immediate disciples in the first ages of christianity. This argument will have its weight with those who reject the doctrine of a soul, and make them look with suspicion upon any pretended proof of the doctrine of Christ's pre-existence, and of its having been the faith of the apostolical age, as well as their previous persuasion that such is not the doctrine of the scriptures. And since all the three posi-

What the meant by "the he was before Abraham was, I am?"

tions are capable of independent proof, the urging of them would not have been *arguing in a circle*, but the adducing of proper *collateral evidence*.

I am, &c.

LETTER I.

Of the Argument from the Writings of the Apostles and the apostolical Fathers.

DEAR SIR,

BEFORE I consider what you have said with respect to the apostolical fathers, I must take some notice of what you have advanced with respect to the argument from *scripture*; though, in this Charge, you do not professedly go upon that ground.

You take it for granted that the *logos*, mentioned in the introduction to the gospel of John, must be a *person*, and not a mere *attribute*, because it is referred to by the pronoun *ούτος*. "This person," you say, "(for that is the natural force of the Greek pronoun *ούτος*) this person was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him, &c." Whereas, this pronoun may refer to any thing that is of the same gender in the Greek language, whether it be a person or not; and it requires but a moderate acquaintance with the New Testament to observe instances of it even there; as in Matt. vii. 12, *ούτος εστιν ὁ νομος*, *This is the law*, and Rev. xx. 14, *ούτος εστιν ὁ δευτερος θανατος*, *This is the second death*.

The same pronoun refers to the *temple*, *ναος*,

John ii. 20; to *bread*, αρτος, John vi. 50; to *stones*, λιθοι, Matt. iv. 3; Acts iv. 11; a *salutation*, ασπασμος, Luke i. 29, and not less than eight times to λογος, where it certainly means nothing more than *speech*, as Matt. xxviii. 15, &c. To satisfy yourself, only look into any Concordance of the Greek Testament.

The *logos* of John, therefore, may be a mere attribute of the Father, though it be the antecedent to the pronoun ουτος. For you will hardly say that the *law*, or *death*, or the *temple*, &c. &c. is a real person capable of intention and action. Besides, I do suppose that John uses a *figurative personification*, which would require the same forms of speech as if he had intended to speak of a real person.

You also find a reference to the pre-existent state of our Saviour in 1 John iv. 2, where it is said *every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God*; by which you say, p. 15, "the opinion that Christ was truly a man is very awkwardly and unnaturally expressed. The turn of the expression," you add, "seems to lead to the notion of a being who had his choice of different ways of coming."

On the other hand, I think the phrase sufficiently similar to other Jewish phrases, of which we find various examples in the scriptures, and that it may be explained by the phrase *partaker of flesh and blood*, Hebrews ii. 14. If the word *coming* must necessarily mean *coming from heaven*, and imply a pre-existent state, John the Baptist must have pre-existed: for our Saviour uses that expression concerning him, as well as concerning himself, Matt. xi. 18, 19, *John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say he hath a dæmon. The Son of Man came eating and drinking, &c.*

It may also be asserted with more certainty still concerning all the apostles that they pre-existed; for our Saviour, in his prayer for them, respecting their mission, makes use of the term *world*, which is not found in 1 John iv. 2, where he says, John xvii. 18, *As thou hast sent me into the world, so have I also sent them into the world.*

The phrase *coming in the flesh*, in my opinion, refers very naturally to the doctrine of the Gnostics, who supposed Christ to be a super-angelic spirit, which descended from heaven, and entered into the body of Jesus. The phrase *he that should come, or who was to come* (his coming having been foretold by the prophets), appears to have been familiar to the Jews, to denote the Messiah: but with them it certainly did not imply any coming down from heaven, because they had no such idea concerning their Messiah.

I see no trace, therefore, in the epistle of John of any more than *one heresy*. He neither expressly says nor hints that there were *two*; and part of his description of this one heresy evidently points to that of the Gnostics, as is acknowledged by yourself; and this heresy was as different as possible from that of the Ebionites. The early writers who speak of them mention them as *two opposite heresies* existing in the same early period; so that it is very improbable *a priori*, that "the same expression," as you say, p. 16, "should be equally levelled at them both." Gnosticism being certainly condemned therefore by the apostle, and not the doctrine of the Ebionites, I conclude that in the latter, which is allowed to have existed in his time, he saw nothing worthy of censure; but that it was the doctrine which he himself had taught. If

this apostle had thought as you do with respect to it, why did he not censure it unequivocally, as you do, and with as much severity?

Tertullian, indeed, maintained that, by those who denied that *Christ was come in the flesh*, John meant the Gnostics, and that by those who denied that *Jesus was the son of God*, he meant the Ebionites*. He had no idea that the former expression only could include both. But as the Gnostics maintained that *Jesus* and *the Christ* were different persons, the latter having come from heaven, and being the son of God, whereas Jesus was the son of man only, the expression of *Jesus being the son of God* is as directly opposed to the doctrine of the Gnostics as that of *Christ coming in the flesh.*

You say, p. 17, "It appears, therefore, that to confess that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, and to affirm that Jesus Christ is truly a man, are propositions not perfectly equivalent. Dr. Priestley indeed has shown himself very sensible of the difference. He would not have otherwise found it necessary for the improvement of his argument, in reciting the third verse of the 4th chapter of St. John's first epistle, to change the expression which he found in the public translation, for another which corresponds far less exactly with the Greek text. For the words that Jesus Christ is come *in* the flesh, Dr. Priestley substitutes these, Jesus Christ is come *of* the flesh." You add afterwards, "He might think it no unwarrantable liberty to correct an expression, which, as not perfectly corresponding with his own system, he could not en-

* De Præscriptione Hæreticorum, sect. xxxiii. p. 214.

tirely approve. It would have been but fair to advertise his readers of so capital an emendation; an emendation for which no support is to be found in the Greek text, nor even in the varieties of any MSS."

I am sorry, Sir, that my printer, or my own mistake, should have given you all this trouble in consulting MSS. &c. I do assure you I had no knowledge of having made a change in a single word in copying that text, nor should I have wished to have made any change at all in it; thinking that, as it now stands, it is quite as much for my purpose as that which you suppose I have purposely substituted in its place. Had you thought me capable of an attempt of this kind, you should not have ascribed to me, as you have done, the greatest *purity of intention* in all that I have written on this subject.

I now proceed to remark on what you have observed from Clemens Romanus, concerning the pre-existence of Christ.

You think that, through my excessive zeal for an hypothesis, I make every thing to favour it: but I hardly think that you can find any thing in my attempt to support the Socinian doctrine, that discovers more zeal than you manifest in support of the Athanasian one; and I think that excessive zeal has misled you in as remarkable a manner as you suppose mine to have misled me. I can no otherwise account for your asserting, p. 16, that "The notion of Christ having had his choice of different ways of coming into the world, is explicitly expressed in a book little inferior in authority to the canonical writings, in the first epistle of Clemens Romanus, in a passage of that epistle which Dr. Priestley, somewhat unfortunately for his cause, has chosen for

the basis of an argument of that holy father's heterodoxy. The sceptre of the majesty of God, says Clemens, Our Lord Jesus Christ, came not in the pomp of pride and arrogance, *although he had it in his power*. Clemens, it seems, conceived that the manner of coming was in the power and choice of the person who was to come."

Of this I have no doubt; but the question is, from *whence* he was then to come. Clemens does not say that it was *from heaven to earth*. That is entirely your own interpretation, for which I see no ground at all; since the phrase is so easily explained by his entering upon his commission, as a public teacher; when, being invested with the power of working miracles, he never made any ostentatious display of it, or indeed exerted it for his own benefit in any respect.

Besides Clemens Romanus, you refer to the epistles of Ignatius, for a proof of the early knowledge of the doctrine of Christ's divinity. "The holy father," you say, p. 19, "hardly ever mentions Christ without introducing some explicit assertion of his divinity, or without joining with the name of Christ some epithet in which it is implied." All this is very true, according to our present copies of Ignatius's epistles. But you must know that the genuineness of them is not only very much doubted, but generally given up by the learned; and it was not perfectly ingenuous in you to conceal that circumstance. First prove those epistles, as we now have them, to be the genuine writings of Ignatius, and then make all the use of them that you can.

I am, &c.

LETTER II.

Of the Distinction between the Ebionites and the Nazarenes.

DEAR SIR,

IT has been imagined by some, that there was a difference between the doctrine of the Ebionites and that of the Nazarenes concerning the person of Christ; the former disbelieving the miraculous conception, and the latter maintaining it; whereas I have said that I can find no sufficient authority for that difference; that which has been thought to have been the peculiar opinion of the Nazarenes, being expressly ascribed to one branch of the Ebionites, by Origen, Eusebius, Epiphanius, and perhaps other ancient writers.

And as to any Nazarenes who believed that Christ was any thing more than man, I find no trace of them in history; so that it is highly probable that the Nazarenes of the second century were the same people with those of the first, or the primitive Jewish Christians, and that they were called Ebionites by way of reproach.

To the arguments from Origen and Eusebius you say nothing, but with respect to that from Epiphanius your conduct is very particular indeed. On my saying that "Epiphanius expressly says that Ebion held the same opinion with the Nazarenes," you say, p. 77, "The only inference to be made from this assertion is this, that Dr. Priestley has never troubled himself to read more of Epiphanius's account of the Ebionites than the first eleven words of the first sentence. Had he read the first sentence to the end, he would have

found that Ebion, although he arose from the school of the Nazarenes, and held similar opinions, preached also other doctrines, of which he was the first inventor. Among these novelties, by the consent of all antiquity, though not with Dr. Priestley's leave, we place the mere humanity of Christ, with or without the miraculous conception."

I shall not return your offensive language; but had you yourself read the second paragraph in this section, you would have found that your remark had no foundation whatever. For it there appears, that though, according to this writer, the Ebionites and Nazarenes did differ in some other particulars, it was not with respect even to the miraculous conception, much less with respect to the doctrine of the mere humanity of Christ.

He says, in the middle of the first section, "that Ebion," whom in the 24th section he makes to be cotemporary with the apostle John, "borrowed his abominable rites from the Samaritans, his opinion (γνωμην) from the Nazarenes, his name from the Jews *, &c." And he says, in the beginning of the second section, "he was cotemporary with the former, and had the same origin with them; and first he asserted that Christ was born of the commerce and seed of man, namely Joseph, as we signified above," referring to the first words of his first section, "when we said that in other respects he agreed with them all, and differed from them only in this, viz. in his adherence to the laws of the Jews with respect to the sab-

* Σαμαρειτων μεν γαρ εχει το βδελυρον, Ιουδαιων δε το ονομα, Οσσαιων δε και Ναζωραιων και Νασαραιων την γνωμην—και Χριστιανων βουλεται εχειν την προσηγοριαν. Hær. 30. sect. i. p. 125. Vol. i. edit. Paris. 1622.

bath, circumcision, and other things that were enjoined by the Jews and Samaritans. He moreover adopted many more things than the Jews, in imitation of the Samaritans *," the particulars of which he then proceeds to mention.

In the same section he speaks of the Ebionites inhabiting the same country as the Nazarenes, and adds that, "agreeing together, they communicated of their perverseness to each other †." Then, in the third section, he observes that afterwards some of the Ebionites entertained a different opinion concerning Christ, than that he was the son of Joseph; supposing that, after Elxæus joined them, they learned of him "some fancy concerning Christ and the holy spirit ‡."

Concerning the Nazarenes, in the seventh section of his account of them, he says that they were Jews in all respects, except "that they believed in Christ; but I do not know whether they hold the miraculous conception, or not §." This amounts to no more than

* Οὗτος γαρ ὁ Εβιων συγχρονος μεν τουτων ὑπηρχεν, απ' αυτων δε συν αυτοις ὁρμαται. τα πρωτα δε εκ παρατριβης και σπερματος ανδρος, τουτεστι του Ιωσηφ, τον Χριστον γεγενησθαι ελεγεν, ὡς και ηδη ἡμιν προειρηται, ὁτι τα ισα τοις αλλοις εν ἁπασι φρονων, εν τουτῳ μονῳ διεφερετο, εν τῳ τῳ νομῳ του Ιουδαϊσμου προσανεχειν, κατα σαββατισμον, και κατα τὴν περιτομην, και κατα τα αλλα παντα ὁσα περ παρα Ιουδαιοις και Σαμαρειται επιτελειται. ετι δε πλειω οὗτος παρα τους Ιουδαιους ὁμοιως τοις Σαμαρειταις διαπραττεται. Hær. 30. sect. ii. p. 125, 126.

† Ενθεν αρχεται της κακης αυτου διδασκαλιας, ὁθεν δηθεν και οἱ Ναζαρηνοι οἱ ανομοι προδεδηλωνται. Συναφθεις γαρ οὗτος εκεινοις, και εκεινοι τουτῳ, ἑκατερος απο της ἑαυτου μοχθηριας τῳ ἑτερῳ μετεδωκε. Ibid. sect. ii. p. 125, 126.

‡ φαντασιαν τινα περι Χριστου διηγειται, και περι πνευματος ἁγιου. Ibid. sect. iii. p. 127.

§ Περι Χριστου δε ουκ οιδα ειπειν ει και αυτοι, τῃ των προειρημενων περι Κηρινθον και Μηρινθον μοχθηρια αχθεντες, ψιλον ανθρωπον νομιζουσιν· η, καθως ἡ αληθεια εχει, δια πνευματος ἁγιου γεγενησθαι εκ Μαριας διαβεβαιουνται. Hær. 29. sect. vii. p. 123.

a doubt, which he afterwards abandoned, by asserting that the Ebionites held the same opinion concerning Christ with the Nazarenes, which opinion he expressly states to be their belief, that Jesus was a mere man, and the son of Joseph.

I now appeal to yourself whether this does not abundantly justify my quoting the authority of Epiphanius, whatever that may be, in support of the Ebionites and Nazarenes having held the same opinion concerning Christ, though they might differ in other things. Please also to observe that these Nazarenes were prior to Ebion, who was himself cotemporary with the apostle John.

You acknowledge, p. 29, that, "in Jerom's time the Nazarenes were so far declined from the pure faith of the first race of Christians, and were become heretical to that degree, that Jerom considered them as a Jewish sect, rather than a Christian." How much earlier this general defection took place you do not say. It appears, however, as you do not deny, that the unbelieving Jews called all those of their race, who were christians, by the name of Ebionites, in the time of Origen. Indeed Origen's own words are too express to admit any doubt of this. "Those," says he, "of the Jews who believe that Jesus is the Christ, are called Ebionites *. And these Ebionites Origen says were of *two sorts*, one of them believing the miraculous conception, and the other not; but all of them considering Christ as a mere man.

You say, indeed, p. 35, that "the word Ebionite had, in the time of Origen, outgrown its original

* Εβιωναιοι χρηματιζουσιν οι απο Ιουδαιων τον Ιησον ως Χριστον παραδεξαμενοι. In Celsum, lib. ii. p. 56.

heresy in the days of Origen? What evidence would that afford of the identity of the Nazarenes and the Ebionites in earlier times? And even that identity, if it were proved, what evidence would it afford, that the church of Jerusalem had been originally unitarian under her first bishops of the circumcision?"

I answer, that if the Jewish christians were universally Ebionites in the time of Origen, the probability is, that they were very generally so in the time of the apostles; and that their heresy, as it is called, did exist in the time of the apostles, is abundantly evident. Whole bodies of men do not very soon change their opinions. And if, as you allow, the Jewish christians were distinguished by the name of Nazarenes (whom I think I have proved to be the same with the Ebionites, who all believed Christ to be a mere man,) from the time that they were settled in the country beyond the sea of Galilee, you carry the opinions of the Ebionites, as universally held by the Jewish christians, to the very age of the apostles; for they retired into that country on the approach of the Jewish war, about which time the apostles went off the stage.

Since all the Jewish christians were called Nazarenes or Ebionites, and all the writers that mention them speak of the doctrine of those sects *in general*, and not those *of their own time* in particular, as being that Christ was a mere man; the natural inference is, that those sects, or the Jewish christians, did *in all times*, after they became so distinguished, (which is allowed to have been just before or presently after the destruction of Jerusalem,) hold that doctrine. And supposing this to have been the case, is it not almost certain, that the apostles themselves must have taught

it? Can it be supposed that the whole Jewish church should have abandoned the doctrine of the divinity of Christ within so few years after the death of the apostles, if they had ever received it from them? As far as I yet see, Jewish christians who were not Nazarenes, or Ebionites, or Nazarenes who held any other doctrine concerning Christ than that he was a mere man, are unknown in history, and have no existence but in imagination.

That those who were called *Nazarenes* were as far from thinking Christ to be God as the *Ebionites*, is evident from the most unexceptionable evidence. Among others is the testimony of Theodoret, though, not having the original, I am obliged to quote it at second hand. This I shall do from Suicer's *Thesaurus*, under the article *Ebion*. He says, "the Nazarenes are Jews, who respect Christ as a righteous man*." And Theodoret lived in Syria, where he had the best opportunity of being acquainted with the state of the Jewish churches.

It is rather extraordinary that such a point should now be made of finding some difference of importance between the Nazarenes and the Ebionites, when no critic, I believe, of any name in the last age pretended to find any. The learned Jeremiah Jones, after disposing in opposite columns all that he could collect concerning them both, from the best authorities, concludes with saying, "It is plain there was a very great agreement between these two ancient sects; and though they went under different names, yet they seem only to differ in this, that the Ebionites had made some addi-

* Οἱ δε Ναζωραιοι Ιουδαιοι εισι τον Χριστον τιμωντες ὡς ανθρωπον δικαιον.

tion to the old Nazarene system. For Origen tells us they were called Ebionites, who from among the Jews owned Jesus to be the Christ *." The running title of this chapter is, *The Nazarenes and Ebionites the same.*

As to the general testimony of Eusebius and other writers, themselves believers in the divinity of Christ, that the church of Jerusalem towards the close of the apostolic age (for it is not pretended that the apostles taught that doctrine clearly, and therefore not with effect, at the opening of their commission,) was orthodox in their sense of the word, it is not to be regarded, unless they bring some sufficient proof of their assertion. They were, no doubt, willing to have it thought so; and, without considering it very particularly, might presume that it was so: but the facts which they themselves record, and the account which they give of the conduct of the apostles in divulging this doctrine to the Jews, make it highly improbable that the case should have been as in general terms they assert.

They furnish as particular evidence against their own general testimony, as we can expect to find at this distance of time, supposing the fact to have been the reverse of what they assert; and the state of things in after times, and even in their own, was such as can never be accounted for, agreeably to the known principles of human nature, on the supposition that it was originally such as they represent it to be. The general prevalence of the unitarian doctrine among the common people in the Gentile world, and the universal prevalence of it among the Jews, from the time that

* Jones on the Canon, vol. i. p. 386.

they were distinguished by the name of Ebionites, or Nazarenes (which was immediately after the age of the apostles), is totally inconsistent with the idea of the divinity of Christ having been the universal or the general opinion in the time of the apostles.

I am, &c.

LETTER III.

That the primitive Unitarians were not considered as Heretics.

DEAR SIR,

AMONG the *extravagant assertions*, as you call them, of D. Zwicker, and which you say were adopted by Episcopius, you mention, p. 7, that of "the opinion of the mere humanity of Christ having prevailed very generally in the first ages, and having never been deemed heretical by the fathers of the orthodox persuasion, at least not in such a degree as to exclude them from the communion of the church." But you say that Episcopius, "from his charitable temper, gave easy credit to the unitarian writers, when they represented the differences of opinion in the early churches as much greater than ever really obtained, and the tenderness for sectaries as more than was ever practised."

If I was disposed to copy your usual language to me upon this occasion, I might have full scope; as what you now advance is the very reverse of the fact; and how you came to misapprehend so plain a case, concerning which I believe no writers of ecclesiastical history ever differed, I do not take upon me to say, but

leave others to judge. That there were as proper unitarians in the very age of the apostles, as any who are so termed at this day (myself by no means excepted), and differing as much from what is now called the orthodox faith, I will venture to say was never questioned; and that these ancient unitarians were not then expelled from christian societies as heretics, is, I believe, as generally allowed. It was, as you say, acknowledged by Episcopius the Arian, and it is likewise allowed by Mosheim the trinitarian, who says, vol. i. p. 191, "However ready many may have been to embrace this erroneous doctrine, it does not appear that this sect formed to themselves a separate place of worship, or removed themselves from the ordinary assemblies of christians." But does it not also follow from the same fact, that these unitarians were not expelled from christian societies by others, as they certainly would have been if they had been considered as heretics?

At the same time the Gnostics were in a very different predicament, and had been so from the beginning. Mosheim says, vol. i. p. 108, "From several passages of the sacred writings it evidently appears, that even in the first century the general meetings of christians were deserted, and separate assemblies formed, in several places, by persons infected with the Gnostic heresy; though," he adds, "this sect was not conspicuous for its numbers or reputation before the time of Adrian."

"Every heretic," says Jerom, "is born in the church, but is cast out of the church, and fights against the church*." Austin says, "As soon as any

* Omnis enim hæreticus nascitur in ecclesia, sed de ecclesia projicitur, et contendit et pugnat contra parentem. In Jerem. xxii. Vol. iv. p. 277.

heresy existed, it separated itself from the Catholic church *." Tertullian says, "If they be heretics, they cannot be christians †."

That Tertullian did not consider unitarians as excluded from the name and the assemblies of christians, is evident from what he says concerning the *apostles' creed*, the several articles of which, as it stood in his time, he recites; asserting that it was the only proper standard of faith, and that the church admitted of a variety of opinions in other respects.

Now it is evident that no article in that creed alludes to the opinions of the *unitarians*, but only to those of the *Gnostics*. This was the oldest formulary of christian faith, and what was taught to all catechumens before baptism; and additions were made to it from time to time, in order to exclude heretics. This creed any unitarian, at least one who believed the miraculous conception, might subscribe in the time of Tertullian, and therefore could not then have been deemed a heretic.

"The rule of faith," he says, "is only one, admitting of no change or emendation, requiring us to believe in one God, almighty, the maker of the world; and in his son Jesus Christ, born of the virgin Mary,

* Statim enim unaquæque hæresis ut existebat, et a congregatione Catholicæ communionis exibat, &c. De Baptismo, contra Donatistas, lib. v. cap. 19. Vol. vii. p. 446.

† Si enim hæretici sunt, Christiani esse non possunt. De Præscriptione Hæreticorum, sect. xxxvii. p. 215.

Tertullian, in his treatise De Præscriptione Hæreticorum, makes but slight mention of the heresy of the *Ebionites*, and when he gives it that appellation, he makes it to consist in the "observance and defence of circumcision and the law;" and yet he represents Hebion as comprised under the description of *Antichrist* by St. John, p. 214. It is evident, however, from his making the unitarians to be the *greater part* of believers, that, in his time, they were not considered as *so far heretical*, or *antichristian*, as to be excluded from christian churches.

crucified under Pontius Pilate, raised from the dead on the third day, received up into heaven, now sitting at the right hand of the Father, and who will come again to judge the living and the dead, even by the resurrection of the flesh. This law of faith remaining, other things, being matters of discipline and conduct, admit of new corrections, the grace of God cooperating *."

The Ebionites, being Jews, had little communication with the Gentiles, and therefore, of course, held separate assemblies; but the Alogi, who held the same doctrine among the Gentiles, had no separate assemblies, but worshipped along with other christians. Indeed, their having no general distinct name before the time of Epiphanius, is of itself a proof that they had no separate places of worship, as the Gnostics and other heretics had. For, had they been distinguished from other christians in their assemblies, it is impossible but they must have been distinguished by a *specific name*. They had, indeed, in particular places, names given them occasionally, from particular persons, who distinguished themselves by the defence of their doctrines, as Artemonites, Noetians, &c. but the general body of unitarians among the Gentiles had no name given them *from the beginning* to distinguish them from other

* Regula quidem fidei una omnino est, sola, immobilis, et irreformabilis, credendi scilicet in unicum deum, omnipotentem, mundi conditorem, et filium ejus Jesum Christum, natum ex virgine Maria, crucifixum sub Pontio Pilato, tertia die resuscitatum a mortuis, receptum in cælis, sedentem nunc ad dextram patris, venturum judicare vivos et mortuos, per carnis etiam resurrectionem. Hac lege fidei manente, cætera jam disciplinæ et conversationis admittunt novitatem correctionis, operante scilicet et proficiente usque ad finem gratia dei. De Virginibus velandis, sect. i. p. 173.

christians, till the attempt made by Epiphanius to call them Alogi. In controversy they sometimes distinguished themselves by the name of *Monarchists*, as holding the monarchy or supremacy of the Father, in opposition to those who maintained the divinity of the Son; but this was only an occasional, and not an original or permanent appellation.

All therefore that Chrysostom could allege in proof of himself and his friends being of the orthodox faith, and no heretics, might have been alleged by the body of unitarians before the time of Theodotus. Teaching unbelievers how to distinguish between orthodox christians and sectaries, he says, "They have some persons by whom they are called. According to the name of the heresiarch, so is the sect; but no man has given us a name, but the faith itself." Again he says, "Were we ever separated from the church? Have we heresiarchs? Have we any name from men, as Marcion gave his name to some, Manichæus to others, and Arius to a third part?" &c.*

All this agrees remarkably well with the supposition, that these unitarians were originally nothing less than the whole body of Christians, and that the trinitarians were the innovators; appearing at first modest and candid, as was natural while they were a small minority, but bold and imperious when they became the majority.

* Εκεινοι εχουσι τινας αφ' ὧν καλουνται, αυτου του αιρεσιαρχου δηλονοτι το ονομα, και εκαστη αιρεσις ὁμοιως· παρ' ἡμιν ανηρ μεν ουδεις εδωκεν ἡμιν ονομα, ἡ δε πιστις αυτη. Chrysost. in Acta Apost. cap. xv. hom. 33. Vol. viii. p. 613.

Μη γαρ απεσχισμεθα της εκκλησιας; μη γαρ αιρεσιαρχας εχομεν; μη γαρ ὑπ' ανθρωπων καλουμεθα; μη γαρ προηγουμενος ἡμων τις εστιν, ὡσπερ τῳ μεν Μαρκιων, τῳ δε Μανιχαιος, τῳ δε Αρειος, τῳ δε αλλος τις αιρεσεως αρχηγος; Ibid. p. 661.

It has been sufficiently observed with what respect Justin Martyr treats the ancient unitarians, evidently showing that in his time his own doctrine stood in need of an *apology*. There are two passages in this writer, in which he speaks of *heretics* with great indignation, as "not christians, but as persons whose tenets were absurd, impious, and blasphemous, with whom christians held no communion;" but in both the passages he evidently had a view to the *Gnostics only*, denominated from the name of their teachers. He particularly mentions the "Marcionites, the Valentinians, the Basilideans, and the Saturnianians." He says "they blasphemed the maker of the world, and the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob," that "they denied the resurrection, and maintained that after death the soul went immediately to heaven*." "Do not," says he,

* Εισιν ουν και εγενοντο, ω φιλοι ανδρες, πολλοι, οἱ αθεα και βλασφημα λεγειν και πραττειν εδιδαξαν, εν ονοματι του Ιησου προσελθοντες· και εισιν ὑφ' ἡμων απο της προσωνυμιας των ανδρων εξ ὁυπερ ἑκαστη διδαχη και γνωμη ηρξατο· (αλλοι γαρ κατ' αλλον τροπον βλασφημειν τον ποιητην των ὁλων, και τον ὑπ' αυτου προφητευομενον ελευσεσθαι Χριστον, και τον Θεον Αβρααμ, και Ισαακ, και Ιακωβ, διδασκουσιν· ὡν ουδενι κοινωνουμεν, οἱ γνωριζοντες αθεους και ασεβεις και αδικους και ανομους αυτους ὑπαρχοντας, και αντι του τον Ιησουν σεβειν, ονοματι μονον ὁμολογειν· και Χριστιανους ἑαυτους λεγουσιν, ὁν τροπον, οἱ εν τοις εθνεσι το ονομα του Θεου επιγραφουσι τοις χειροποιητοις, και ανομοις και αθεοις τελεταις κοινονουσι·) και εισιν αυτων οἱ μεν τινες καλουμενοι Μαρκιανοι, οἱ δε Ουαλεντινιανοι, οἱ δε Βασιλιδεανοι, οἱ δε Σατορνιλιανοι, και αλλοι αλλω ονοματι, απο του αρχηγετου της γνομης ἑκαστος ονομαζομενος, &c. Dialog. edit. Thirlby, p. 208.

Πολλους δ' αυ, και των της καθαρας και ευσεβους οντων Χριστιανων γνωμης τουτο μη γνωριζειν, εσημανα σοι. τους γαρ λεγομενους μεν Χριστιανους, οντας δε αθεους, και ασεβεις αἱρεσιωτας, ὁτι κατα παντα βλασφημα, και αθεα, και ανοητα διδασκουσιν εδηλωσα σοι.—Ει γαρ και συνεβαλετε ὑμεις τισι λεγομενοις Χριστιανοις, και τουτο μη ὁμολογουσιν, αλλα και βλασφημειν τολμωσι τον Θεον Αβρααμ, και τον Θεον Ισαακ, και τον Θεον Ιακωβ, οἱ και λεγουσι μη ειναι νεκρων αναστασιν, αλλα ἁμα τω απεθνησκειν ταὶ ψυχας αυτων αναλαμβανεσθαι εις τον ουρανον, μη ὑπολαβητε αυτους Χριστιανους. Ibid. p. 311.

"suppose these to be christians." Had he considered the *unitarians*, with whom he appears to have been well acquainted, as heretics, would he not have mentioned or alluded to their tenets also in those passages in which he speaks, and pretty largely, of the Christian heretics in general? It is impossible, I should think, to read those passages, as they stand in the original, introduced as a fulfilment of our Saviour's prophecy, that there should be false Christs, and false prophets, who should deceive many, and not be satisfied that (like the apostle John) Justin Martyr had no idea of there being any *heretics* in the christian church, in his time, besides the Gnostics*.

How little is it that Irenæus says of the Ebionites, and with how little severity, in his large treatise concerning heresy! It is little more than one page out of four hundred, while all the rest is employed on the different branches of Gnosticisms. The harshest epithet that he applies to them is that of *vani*, which, considering the manner of the ancients, is certainly very moderate. *Vani autem et Ebionæi* †. He says, indeed ‡, that "God will judge them," and "how can they be saved, if it be not God that worked out their salvation upon earth?" But this is no sentence of damnation passed upon them in particular for holding their doctrine, but an argument used by him to refute them; and is the same as if he had said, Mankind in general could not be saved, if Christ had not been God as well as man.

There is no instance, I believe, of any person having been excommunicated for being an unitarian before

* See Dialog. edit. Thirlby, p. 208, pars secunda, p. 311.
† Lib. 5. cap. i. p. 394. ‡ Lib. 4. cap. lix. p. 358.

Theodotus, by Victor bishop of Rome, the same that excommunicated all the eastern churches because they would not celebrate Easter on the day that he prescribed. Whereas had the universal church been trinitarian from the beginning, would not the first unitarians, the first broachers of a doctrine so exceedingly offensive to them, as in all ages it has ever been, have experienced their utmost indignation, and have been expelled from all christian societies with horror?

What makes it more particularly evident, that the doctrine of the simple humanity of Christ was not thought deserving of excommunication in early times, is, that though the Ebionites were *anathematized*, as Jerom says, or excommunicated, it was not on account of their denying the doctrine of the divinity of Christ, but *only* on account of their rigid observance of the Mosaic law*. Had you, Sir, been appointed to draw up a form of excommunication for Socinus, would you have confined your charge of heresy to his refusing to baptize infants, or his maintaining the unlawfulness of bearing arms? The principal article would certainly have been his believing, with the Ebionites, that Christ was nothing more than a man.

Such a doctrine as that of the simple humanity of Christ, in a church universally trinitarian, must necessarily have given greater alarm, and have roused the orthodox to exert more vigorous measures than the same doctrine could do in the time of Calvin, when it was far from being novel; and yet he, though ex-

* Si hoc verum est, in Cherenti et Hebionis hæresim dilabimur, qui, credentes in Christo, propter hoc *solum* a patribus anathematizati sunt, quod legis cæremonias Christi evangelio miscuerunt, et sic nova confessi sunt ut vetera non amitterent. Hieronymus Augustino, Ep. 89. vol. i. p. 634.

posed to persecution himself, thought it to be a crime for which burning alive was no more than an adequate punishment; and almost all the christian world justified his using that rigour with respect to Servetus. Now, since the minds of men are in all ages similarly affected in similar circumstances, we may conclude, that the unitarian doctrine, which was treated with so much respect when it was first mentioned, was in a very different predicament then, from what it was at the time of the Reformation. The difference of *majority* and *minority*, and nothing else, can account for this difference of treatment.

You will say, if the great majority of christians in early times were unitarians, why did not they excommunicate the innovating trinitarians? I answer, that the doctrine of the trinity was not, in its origin, such as could give much alarm, as I have explained in my Reply to the Monthly Reviewers, p. 11; and before it became very formidable there was a great majority of the learned and philosophizing clergy on its side. However, that it did give very great alarm, as it began to unfold itself, I have brought undeniable evidence.

What words, in any language, can express more alarm or dislike than *expavescere* and *scandalizare*, by which Tertullian describes their feelings on this subject? And Origen has some equally strong in Greek, as ταρασσειν, &c. Had the unitarians in those times been *writers*, we should probably have heard more of their complaints. At present we know nothing of them besides what we are able to collect concerning them from their adversaries, who thought it necessary to make frequent apologies to them.

On the other hand, there is indisputable evidence that the unitarian doctrine, and even in its most obnoxious form, existed in the very time of the apostles. The Jewish christians in general, not only thought that Christ was a *mere man*, but even that he was the son of Joseph; and the *gradation* that you speak of, from the doctrine of the Ebionites in the time of St. John, to that of Theodotus in the time of Victor, has no existence but in your own single imagination. And yet these unitarians were respected, and not expelled from christian societies, by the orthodox of that age. Explain this fact, in consistence with their not being the majority of christians, if you can.

At this day, as the unitarian doctrine happily gains ground among christians, the horror with which it has been considered is manifestly very much abated. Your treatment of me, and of all who hold the same opinion, is rather extraordinary, considering the times in which we live; but it is mild and moderate compared with the usual treatment of the same doctrine, even in this tolerant country, a hundred, or even fifty years ago.

At the time of the Revolution it was made *blasphemy* by act of parliament openly to avow what I now openly defend, and was punishable with confiscation of goods and imprisonment for life, if persisted in; and the law still remains unrepealed. But it is seen to be so arbitrary and unjust, (as directed against those who conscientiously believe in one God only, without acknowledging three persons to be that one God,) that no one dares to put it in execution; and the state, I am confident, only waits for that application which, I trust, will be made to relieve them, and to wipe off such a disgrace from our statutes.

LETTER IV.

Of the Inference that may be drawn from the Passage of Athanasius, concerning the Opinion of the early Jewish Christians relating to Christ.

DEAR SIR,

As one argument that the primitive church of Jerusalem was properly unitarian, maintaining the simple humanity of Christ, I observed, that "Athanasius himself was so far from denying it, that he endeavoured to account for it by saying that all the Jews were so firmly persuaded that their Messiah was to be nothing more than a man like themselves, that the apostles were obliged to use great caution in divulging the doctrine of the proper divinity of Christ."

This I maintain to be a short but true state of the case. Athanasius both expressly allowed that the Jewish christians were at first of the opinion that Christ was no more than a man; and he accounts for the apostles conniving at it, without saying how long that prudent connivance continued. In my Appendix you will find a somewhat fuller state of the argument. I shall now distinctly consider all that you have advanced to invalidate the inference that I have made from this remarkable passage. I shall afterwards show that it was not Athanasius only, but Chrysostom also; and, as he says, the *ancients, and the most distinguished fathers of the church*, who gave the same representation of the state of things in the apostolical age.

You say, p. 22, that Athanasius is here speaking of the unbelieving Jews. The expression is οἱ τοτε Ιουδαιοι,

the *Jews of that age*; which includes both the believing and unbelieving Jews. Had he been speaking of the Jews of his own time, it would, I own, have been probable that he meant the unbelieving Jews; but speaking, as he does, of the Jews at the very first promulgation of christianity among them, it is most natural to suppose that he meant *all* the Jews. Paul, long after his conversion to christianity, called himself a Jew. However, it will be sufficiently evident from the whole tenor of the passage, that he must have meant the believing Jews principally, and in some respects the believing Jews only, exclusive of the unbelieving ones. And in this construction of the passage I am by no means singular, but have the sanction of trinitarians themselves.

But admitting that the Jews here meant were unbelieving Jews, they were such as the apostles wished to convert to christianity, and many of them soon became christians. How the apostles conducted themselves with respect to these men, first unbelieving and then believing Jews, Athanasius thus informs us. Our readers may judge of the fidelity of the translation by consulting the original in the margin; and as I only abridged the passage before, I shall now give a larger portion of it at full length, for the whole is much too large to transcribe*. "Will they affirm that the

* Ουδεν γαρ αυτοις ατολμητον, ὅτι και αυτοι οἱ αποστολοι τα Αρειου εφρονουν. ανθρωπον γαρ αυτον απο Ναζαρετ; και παθητον τον Χριστον απαγγελλουσιν, εκεινων τοινυν τοιαυτα φανταζομενων, αρ' επειδη τοις ῥημασι τουτοις εχρησαντο, μονον ανθρωπον ηδεισαν τον Χριστον οἱ αποστολοι, και πλεον ουδεν; μη γενοιτο· ουκ εστιν ουδε εις νουν ποτε τουτο λαζειν· αλλα και τουτο ὡς αρχιτεκτονες σοφοι, και οικονομοι μυστηριων θεου πεποιηκασι· και την αιτιαν εχουσιν ευλογον· επειδη γαρ οἱ τοτε Ιουδαιοι πλανηθεντες τε και πλανησαντες Ἑλληνας, ενομιζον τον Χριστον ψιλον ανθρωπον, μονον εκ σπερματος Δαζιδ ερχεσθαι, καθ' ὁμοιοτητα των εκ του Δαζιδ αλλων γενομενων τεκνων·

apostles held the doctrine of Arius, because they say that Christ was a man of Nazareth, and suffered on the cross? Or, because they used these words, were the apostles of opinion that Christ was only a man, and nothing else? By no means: this is not to be imagined. But this they did as *wise master builders and stewards of the mysteries of God*; and they had this specious pretence for it. For the Jews of that age, being deceived themselves, and having deceived the Gentiles, thought that Christ was a mere man, only that he came of the seed of David, resembling other descendants of David, and did not believe either that he was God, or that the word was made flesh. On this account the blessed apostles, with *great prudence*, in the first place, taught what related to the humanity of our Saviour to the Jews; that having fully persuaded them, from his miraculous works, that Christ was come, they might afterwards bring them to the belief of his divinity, showing that his works were not those of a man, but of God. For example, Peter having said that Christ was a man who had suffered, immediately added, *he is the prince of life.* In the gospel he confesses, Thou art the Christ, the son of the living God; and in his epistle he calls him the *bishop of souls.*"

Here, I think, are sufficient marks of great *caution*, and of the apostles leading their converts to the know-

ουτε δε θεον αυτον, ουδε ὁτι λογος σαρξ εγενετο επιστευον. τουτου ἑνεκα, μετα πολλης της συνεσεως οἱ μακαριοι αποστολοι τα ανθρωπινα του σωτηρος εξηγουντο πρωτον τοις Ιουδαιοις, ἱν' ὁλως πεισαντες αυτους, εκ των φαινομενων και γενομενων σημειων, ελληλυθεναι τον Χριστον, λοιπον και εις την περι της θεοτητος αυτου πιστιν αυτους αναγαγωσι, δεικνυντες ὁτι τα γενομενα εργα ουκ εστιν ανθρωπου, αλλα θεου. αμελει Πετρος ὁ λεγων ανδρα παθητον τον Χριστον, ευθυς συνηπτεν Οὑτος αρχηγος της ζωης εστιν. &c. &c. De Sententia Dionysii, Athanasii Opera, Vol. i. p. 553, 554. edit. Colon. 1686.

ledge of the divinity of Christ, by very distant and uncertain *inferences* indeed, such as Jews, so previously persuaded as he represents them to have been, of the simple humanity of their Messiah, would not very readily understand.

Now if this caution was requisite in the first instance, and with respect to the first converts that the apostles made, it was equally requisite with respect to the rest, at least for the sake of others who were not yet converted; unless the first should have been enjoined secrecy on that head. For whenever it had been known that the apostles were preaching not such a Messiah as they expected, viz. *a man like themselves*, but *the eternal God*, the difference was so great, that a general alarm must have been spread, and the conversion of the rest of the Jews (to a doctrine which must have appeared so highly improbable to them) must have been impeded. We may therefore presume that the apostles must have connived at this state of ignorance, concerning the divinity of Christ, in their Jewish converts, till there was little hope of making any further converts among the Jews, and till the gospel began to be preached to the Gentiles.

Indeed, this must have been the case, according to Athanasius's own account. For he says that these Jews, being in an error themselves, led the Gentiles into the same error. For your notion, that by *Gentiles* our author here meant *proselytes of the gate*, is altogether arbitrary and improbable. Nay, the very existence of these proselytes of the gate, you must know, has been questioned, and I think fully disproved by Dr. Lardner and others. Besides, it is not to be supposed that the doctrine of a Messiah could have been very interesting

to any besides native Jews, or, at the most, those that were complete proselytes; whereas to the Gentile christians it was a matter of the greatest moment. By these Gentiles, therefore, I conclude that Athanasius must have meant *christian Gentiles*, and consequently that by the Jews who led them into that mistake, he meant the believing and not the unbelieving Jews. The learned Beausobre, a trinitarian, and therefore an unexceptionable judge in this case, quoting this very passage, does not hesitate to pronounce that they were believing Jews who were intended by the writer. "Ces Juifs," he says, "ne sont pas les Juifs incrédules, mais ceux qui faisoient profession du christianisme*."

What I have respect to in this passage, is the obvious general tenor and spirit of it, and not particular words or phrases; or I might observe, that the *verbs* in that part of the passage which mentions *Christ being come of the seed of David,* and the *word being made flesh*, are not in the *future tense*, and therefore do not naturally refer to the Messiah in general, who *was to come*, but to a person who was *actually come*, that is, to Jesus Christ in particular. The Latin translator of Athanasius, a catholic, and certainly no unitarian, had so little suspicion of any other meaning, that he renders τον Χριστον in this place by *Jesum;* so that I am far from being singular, or particularly biassed by my own opinions, in my construction of this passage.

Supposing, however, not only the proselytes of the gate, but the whole body of the Gentiles (little as they were concerned in the question) to have been previously taught by the Jews that their Messiah, when-

* Histoire de Manichéisme, vol. ii. p. 517.

ever he should come, would be nothing more than a man; if this was an opinion that they were as fully persuaded of as Athanasius represents the Jews, their teachers, to have been, the same caution must have been as necessary with respect to them as with respect to the Jews themselves, and for the same reason.

Athanasius must, therefore, be understood to say that the Jewish converts, while (through the caution of the apostles) they were ignorant of the divinity of Christ, preached the gospel *in that state* to the Gentiles. And as he speaks of Gentiles *in general*, and without any respect to *time*, and also of their being actually brought over to that belief, it is impossible not to understand him of this caution being continued till the gospel had been fully preached to the Gentiles as well as the Jews. Besides, one of the instances that Athanasius here gives of the preaching of the simple humanity of Christ, is taken from the discourse of the apostle Paul at Athens, which was about the year 53 after Christ; and indeed at this time the gospel had not been preached to any great extent among the Gentiles. For it was on this very journey that this apostle first preached the gospel in Macedonia and Greece.

If, according to Athanasius, the apostolical reserve with respect to the doctrine of the divinity of Christ continued till this time (and he says nothing concerning the termination of it), we may presume that this great doctrine, supposing it to have been known to the apostles, had not been publicly taught by them till very near the time of their dispersion and death; and then I think it must have come too late even from them. For it appears from the book of Acts, that their mere *authority* was not sufficient to overbear the prejudices

of their countrymen. At least, such an extraordinary communication of a doctrine of which they had no conception must have occasioned such an alarm and consternation as we must have found some traces of in the history of the Acts of the apostles. It could not have been received without hesitation and debate.

If we can suppose that the apostles, some time before their death, did communicate this great and unexpected doctrine, the effects of such communication must have been very transient. For, presently after the death of the apostles, we find all the Jewish christians distinguished by the name of *Nazarenes* or *Ebionites*, and no trace of the doctrine of the divinity of Christ among them. If you can produce any evidence to the contrary, I hope you will do it. It certainly behoves you to do it if you can; for without this you will hardly make it appear probable that the apostles ever communicated such a doctrine at all.

You say, p. 25, "With what readiness the apostles led their catechumens on from the simplest principles to the highest mysteries; of this consummate ability of the apostles, in the capacity of teachers, Athanasius speaks with due commendation. Their *caution* he never mentions. On the contrary, the rapid progress of their instruction, how they passed at once from the detail of our Lord's life on earth, to the mystery of his Godhead, is one principal branch of his encomium. I wish that Dr. Priestley had produced the passage in which he thinks the apostles are taxed with caution."

I now have produced the passage, and have pointed out a *word*, viz. συνεσις, which, in the connexion in which it stands, can bear no other sense than *caution*, and great caution (μετα πολλης συνεσεως); and I have

likewise shown, from the whole tenor of the discourse, that Athanasius could have intended nothing else than to describe their prudence or extreme caution, and to account for it. He evidently does not represent them as deferring the communication of the doctrine of the divinity of Christ, on account of its being more conveniently taught afterwards, as part of a system of faith, but only lest it should have given offence to the Jews. If this *skill* or *prudence*, in these circumstances, be not the same thing with *caution*, I do not know what is meant by *caution*.

On the other hand, I find no trace of *rapidity* in this account of the apostles' conduct. All that approaches to it is, that, immediately after any mention of the humanity of Christ, (which he speaks of as necessary on account of the Jewish prejudices,) he says, the apostles subjoin some expression which might have led their hearers to the knowledge of his divinity; but the instances he produces are such as plainly confute any pretensions to their being a *distinct* and *full* declaration of that doctrine.

The first instance he gives us is from the speech of Peter to the Jews on the day of Pentecost, in which he says, Acts ii. 22. *Ye men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you, by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know.* In this Athanasius acknowledges that Peter preached the proper humanity of Christ, but says that *immediately* afterwards (referring to his discourse on the cure of the lame man in the temple) he called him the *prince of life*, Acts iii. 15. *And killed the prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead.*

Had the apostle meant that his audience should have understood him as referring to the divinity of Christ by that expression, his prudence must have lasted but a very short time indeed; probably not many days. If, therefore, his intention was, as Athanasius represents it, to preach the doctrine of the humanity of Christ *in the first place*, and not to divulge the doctrine of his divinity till they were *firmly persuaded of his Messiahship*, he could not *mean* to allude to his divinity in this speech, which was addressed not to the believing but to the unbelieving Jews. At least he could only have thought of doing it in such a manner as that his hearers might afterwards *infer* the doctrine from it. And it must have required great ingenuity, and even a strong prepossession in favour of the divinity of Christ, (the reverse of which this writer acknowledges,) to imagine that this expression of *prince of life*, which so easily admits of another interpretation, had any such reference. Moreover, in all the instances which Athanasius produces concerning the conduct of the apostles in this respect, from the book of Acts, he does not pretend to find one in which the divinity of Christ is *distinctly* preached, though he quotes four passages in which his humanity is plainly spoken of.

When all these things are considered, viz. that Athanasius acknowledged that it required great caution in the apostles to divulge the doctrine of the divinity of Christ, and that the gospel was preached with success among the Gentiles while the Jews were ignorant of it; it can hardly be doubted but that he must himself have considered the Christian church in general as unitarian

in the time of the apostles, at least till near the time of their dispersion and death*.

With respect to Athanasius's declared opinion on this subject, you say, p. 21, "Now in this piece upon the orthodoxy of Dionysius, Athanasius no where, I confess, denies that the primitive church of Jerusalem was unitarian; nor, on the other hand, do I recollect that Dr. Priestley hath asserted it in any part of his History of Electricity." Whether in my History of Electricity, or in this piece of Athanasius, in which he gives a large account of the conduct of the apostles with respect to their preaching the divinity of Christ, an account of the actual *effect* of such preaching might be more naturally expected, I leave to our readers. I should have thought that, if Athanasius *could* have added, that, notwithstanding their caution in preaching this extraordinary doctrine, against which he acknowledges the Jews had the strongest prejudices, they nevertheless did preach it with effect, and that it was the general belief of the Jewish christians in their time, he would not have thought it at all foreign to his purpose. It would certainly have favoured his great object in writing this piece, viz. the vindication of Dionysius in using a like caution with respect to the Sabellians, to have added, that this prudence or caution was not, in

* According to Athanasius, the Jews were to be well grounded in the belief of Jesus being the Christ, before they could be taught the doctrine of his divinity. Now if we look into the book of Acts, we shall clearly see that they had not got beyond the first lesson in the apostolic age; the great burden of the preaching of the apostles being to persuade the Jews that *Jesus was the Christ*. That he was likewise *God*, they evidently left to their successors; who, indeed, did it most effectually, though it required a long course of time to do it.

either of the two cases, finally detrimental to the cause of truth. I therefore consider the silence of Athanasius on this head as a negative argument of some weight; and upon the whole I think I have made it appear that Athanasius must have supposed that both the Jewish and Gentile churches were unitarian in the time of the apostles, at least he enables us to infer that it must have been so; and this is quite sufficient for my argument.

That Athanasius, however, should actually consider the doctrine of the divinity of Christ as for some time unknown to the generality of christians, in the age of the apostles, will be thought the less extraordinary, when it is observed that, like Tertullian, he acknowledged the unitarian doctrine to be very prevalent among the lower class of people in his own time. He calls them the οἱ πολλοι, *the many*, and describes them as persons of "low understanding. Things that are sublime and difficult," he says, "are not to be apprehended except by faith; and ignorant people must fall, if they cannot be persuaded to rest in faith, and avoid curious questions*."

There can be no doubt, therefore, but that the doctrine of the trinity was a long time very unpopular with the common people among christians; and this is a fact that cannot be satisfactorily accounted for, but on

* Λυπει δε και νυν τους αντεχομενους της ἁγιας πιστεως, ἡ περι των αυτων βλασφημιων βλαπτουσα τους πολλους· μαλιστα τους ηλαττωμενους περι την συνεσιν. Τα γαρ μεγαλα και δυσκαταληπτα των πραγματων πιστει τῃ προς τον θεον λαμβανεται. Ὁθεν οἱ περι την γνωσιν αδυνατουντες αποπιπτουσιν, ει μη πειθειεν εμμενειν τῃ πιστει, και τας περιεργους ζητησεις εκτρεπεσθαι. De Incarnatione Verbi, contra Paulum Samosatensem, Athanasii Opera, vol. i. p. 591.

the supposition that the doctrine of the simple humanity of Christ was that which had been handed down to them by tradition from the apostles. It was not the doctrine of Arius that Athanasius is here complaining of, but that of Paulus Samosatensis, who was a proper unitarian, believing that Christ had no existence before he was born of his mother Mary. The great popularity of Photinus, at and after this time, shows with what difficulty the common people were brought off from this doctrine; and also the confession of Austin, that he was of that opinion till he became acquainted with the writings of Plato.

It is not from Athanasius alone that we are informed of this cautious proceeding of the apostles in divulging the doctrine of the divinity of Christ. Chrysostom ascribes the same caution both to Christ himself and the apostles. "One reason," he says, "why Christ said so little of his own divinity, was on account of the weakness of his auditors. Whenever he spake of himself as any thing more than man, they were tumultuous and offended; but when he spake with humility, and as a man, they ran to him and received his words*." Of this he gives many examples. "Our Saviour," he says, "never taught his own divinity in express words, but only by actions, leaving the fuller explication of it to his disciples. If," says he, "they (meaning the Jews) were so much offended at the addition of another law to their former, much more must they have been with the doctrine of his divinity †."

* Ει ποτε τι της ανθρωπινης φυσεως ειπε πλεον, εθορυβουντο, και εσκανδαλιζοντο· ει δε τι ποτε ταπεινον, και ανθρωπινον, προσετρεχον, και τον λογον εδεχοντο. Chrysost. Homil. 32. vol. i. p. 409.

† Δια δε τουτο ουδε περι της θεοτητος της εαυτου πανταχου φαι-

Chrysostom ascribes the same caution to the apostles on this subject. He says that they concealed the doctrine of the miraculous conception on account of the incredulity of the Jews with respect to it; and that when they began to preach the gospel, they insisted chiefly on the resurrection of Christ *. With respect to the former, (and the same may no doubt be applied to the latter,) he says he did not give "his own opinion only, but that which came by tradition from the fathers and eminent men. He therefore would not have his hearers to be alarmed, or think his account of it extraordinary †."

Thus, he says, that "it was not to give offence to the Jews that Peter, in his first speech to them, did not say that *Christ* did the wonderful works of which he spake, but that *God* did them by him; that by speaking more modestly he might conciliate them to himself ‡." The same caution he attributes to him, in "not saying that *Christ* but that *God* spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, that by these means he might bring them gradually to the faith §."

I cannot help observing how extremely improbable is this account of the conduct of the apostles given by

νεται σαφως παιδευων. Ει γαρ ἡ του νομου προσθηκη τοσουτον αυτους εθορυβει, πολλῳ μαλλον το θεον ἑαυτον αποφαινειν. In caput Matt. v. Hom. 16. vol. vii. p. 154.

* Matt. cap. i. Hom. 3. vol. vii. p. 20.

† Αλλα μη θορυβεισθε προς το παραδοξον του λεγομενου. ου δε γαρ εμος ὁ λογος, αλλα πατερων ἡμετερων θαυμαστων και επισημων ανδρων. In cap. Matt. i. Hom. 3. vol. vii. p. 20.

‡ Ουκετι λεγει ὁτι αυτος, αλλ' ὁτι δι' αυτου ὁ θεος, ἱνα μαλλον τῳ μετριαζειν εφελκυσηται. In Acta Apostolorum cap. ii. Hom. 6. vol. viii. p. 491.

§ Ου λεγει ὡν ειπεν ὁ Χριστος, αλλ' ὡν ελαλησεν ὁ θεος, ετι τῳ συσκιαζειν μαλλον αυτους επαγομενος εις πιστιν ῥημα. In Acta Apostolorum, Hom. 9. vol. viii. p. 511.

Athanasius, Chrysostom, and other orthodox fathers of the church, considering what we know of the character and the instructions of the apostles. They were plain men, and little qualified to act the cautious part here ascribed to them. And their instructions certainly were to teach all that they knew, even what their master communicated to them in the greatest privacy. Whereas, upon this scheme, they must have suffered numbers to die in the ignorance of the most important truth in the gospel, lest, by divulging it too soon, the conversion of others should have been prevented. The case evidently was, that these fathers did not know how to account for the great prevalence of the unitarian doctrine among the Gentiles as well as the Jews in the early ages of christianity, but upon such a hypothesis as this. Let their successors do better if they can.

This observation on the character and instructions of the apostles must make all such accounts of their conduct absolutely incredible with respect to every doctrine of *consequence*, on which they could not but lay proportionable stress. But it may perhaps enable us to account for the ignorance of the Jews, and other early christians, with respect to matters of little or no consequence, on which the apostles did not lay any stress, and for which reason they might say little or nothing about them, as for instance with respect to the miraculous conception.

In our Saviour's lifetime he certainly passed for the son of Joseph with the Jews in general. The first disciples would naturally adopt the same opinion; and it does not appear that the apostles thought it a matter of consequence enough to set them right with respect

to it. For there is no reference whatever to the miraculous conception either in the book of Acts, or in any of the Epistles. Indeed that doctrine has never been thought to be of any importance *in itself*; Christ being as properly a *man* on one supposition as on the other. It is therefore only of importance with respect to the credit of Matthew and Luke, as historians, and that not with respect to what they write from their *own knowledge*, but only as to what they collected from others. Whereas, if Christ was not a *mere man*, but either truly *God*, or the *maker of the world under God*, it could not but have appeared to be a matter of the greatest consequence in the scheme of christianity itself; and the apostles would certainly have taken some opportunity of inculcating it with an energy suited to its importance. We may therefore easily account for the general prevalence of the opinion of Christ being the son of Joseph, though it was false; but it is absolutely impossible to account for the general prevalence of the doctrine of the mere humanity of Christ, on the supposition of his being either God, or the maker of the world under God, and consequently of his being known to be so by the apostles. I may perhaps take some future opportunity of making some further observations on the subject of the *miraculous conception*; and in the mean time the Monthly Reviewer may be indulging his conjectures, and preparing his exclamations; for which our readers will likewise be pretty well prepared.

I am, &c.

LETTER V.

An Argument for the late Origin of the Doctrine of the Divinity of Christ, from the Difficulty of tracing the Time in which it was first divulged.

DEAR SIR,

I CANNOT dismiss this subject of the strong prejudices of the Jews in general in favour of their Messiah being merely a man, (thus explicitly acknowledged by Athanasius, Chrysostom, and others, who say, that *on this account* the apostles did not preach the doctrine of the divinity of Christ at first, but only after the people were satisfied with respect to his Messiahship,) without requesting your opinion with respect to the *time* when this great secret of Christ not being merely a man, but the eternal God himself, or the maker of heaven and earth under God, was communicated, first to the apostles themselves, and then by them to the body of christians.

You cannot say that John the Baptist preached any such doctrine; and when the apostles first attached themselves to Jesus, it is evident they only considered him as being such a Messiah as the rest of the Jews expected, viz. a man, and a king. When Nathaniel was introduced to him it was evidently in that light, John i. 45. *Philip findeth Nathaniel, and saith unto him, We have found him of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.* He had then, we may suppose, no knowledge even of the miraculous conception.

Now, as you say, p. 24, that " Christ was so much

more than man, that his being found in fashion as a man was really the most extraordinary part of his history and character;" and at first the apostles, you must allow, were wholly ignorant of this; there must have been a *time* within the compass of the evangelical history when this most extraordinary part of his character was communicated to them. Now what period in the gospel history can you pitch upon, in which you can suppose that this great discovery was made to them? What traces do you find of it?

That Jesus was even the *Messiah* was divulged with the greatest caution, both to the apostles and to the body of the Jews. For a long time our Lord said nothing explicit on this subject, but left his disciples as well as the Jews at large to judge of him from what they saw. In this manner only he replied to the messengers that John the Baptist sent to him.

If the high-priest expressed his horror by rending his clothes on Jesus avowing himself to be the Messiah, what would he have done if he had heard, or suspected, that he had made any higher pretensions? And if he had made them, they must have transpired. When the people in general saw his miraculous works, they only wondered that God should have given so much power to a man, Matt. ix. 8. *When the multitude saw it, they marvelled, and glorified God, who had given such power unto men*; and yet this was on the occasion of his pronouncing the cure of a paralytic person, by saying, *Thy sins be forgiven thee*, which the Pharisees thought to be a blasphemous presumption.

At the time that Herod heard of him, it was conjectured by some that he was Elias, by others that he

was a prophet, and by some that he was John risen from the dead; but none of them imagined that he was either the most high God himself, or the maker of the world under God. It was not so much as supposed by any person that Jesus performed his mighty works by any proper power of *his own*; so far were they from suspecting that he was the God who had spoken to them by Moses, as you now suppose him to have been.

If he was known to be a God at all before his death, it could only have been revealed to his disciples, perhaps the apostles, or only his chief confidants among them, Peter, James, and John, suppose on the mount of transfiguration, though nothing is said concerning it in the history of that transaction. Certainly what they saw in the garden of Gethsemane could not have led them to suspect any such thing. But if it had ever been known to Peter, can we suppose he could have denied him as he did? Besides, as our Lord told them there were many things which he could not inform them of before his death, and that they should know afterwards; this was a thing so very wonderful and unsuspected, that if any articles of information were kept from them at that time, *this* must certainly have been one.

If you suppose that Thomas was acquainted with this most extraordinary part of his master's character, which led him to cry, *My Lord and my God*, when he was convinced of his resurrection, as he was not one of the *three* who had been intrusted with any secrets, it must have been known to all the twelve, and to Judas Iscariot among the rest. And suppose him to have known and to have believed that Jesus was his

God and maker, was it possible for him, or for any man, to have formed a deliberate purpose to betray him? (Peter, you may say, was taken by surprise, and was in personal danger.) Or, if he had only heard of the pretension, and had not believed it, would he not have made some advantage of that imposition, and have made the discovery of this, as well as of every thing else that he knew to his prejudice?

If you suppose that the divinity of Christ was unknown to the apostles till the day of Pentecost; besides losing the benefit of several of your arguments for this great doctrine, which you now carefully collect from the four evangelists, we have no account of any such discovery having been made at that time, or at any subsequent one. And of other articles of illumination of much less consequence than this we have distinct information, and also of the manner in which they impressed them. This is particularly the case with respect to the extension of the blessings of the gospel to uncircumcised Gentiles. But what was this article, to the knowledge of their master being the most high God?

If the doctrine of the divinity of Christ had been actually preached by the apostles, and the Jewish converts in general had adopted it, it could not but have been well known to the unbelieving Jews; and would they, who were at that time, and have been ever since, so exceedingly zealous with respect to the doctrine of the divine unity, not have taken the alarm, and have urged this objection to christianity, as teaching the belief of more Gods than one, in the apostolic age? And yet no trace of any thing of this nature can be perceived in the whole history of the book of Acts, or

any where else in the New Testament. As soon as ever the Jews had any pretence for it, we find them sufficiently quick and vehement in urging this their great objection to christianity. To answer the charge of holding *two* or *three Gods*, is a very considerable article in the writings of several of the ancient christian fathers. Why then do we find nothing of this kind in the age of the apostles? The only answer is, that there was no occasion for it, the doctrine of the divinity of Christ not having then been started*.

Consider, Sir, the charge that was advanced against Peter and John at the first promulgation of the gospel. You will find it amounts to nothing but their being disturbers of the people, by preaching in the name of Jesus. What was the accusation against Stephen (Acts vi. 13.) but his *speaking blasphemous things against the temple and the law?* Accompany the apostle Paul in all his travels, and attend to his discourses with the Jews in their synagogues, and their perpetual and inveterate persecution of him, you will find no trace of their so much as suspecting that he preached a *new divinity*, as the godhead of Christ must have appeared, and always has appeared to them.

In the year 58, Paul tells the elders of the church of Ephesus (Acts xx. 27.) that *he had not failed to declare unto them the whole counsel of God.* We may be confident, therefore, that, if he had any such doc-

* Athanasius strongly expresses this objection, as made by both Jews and Gentiles, to the incarnation of the son of God, though as a thing that was gloried in by Christians. "The Jews," says he, "reproach us for it; the Gentiles laugh at it; but we adore it." Ἢν Ἰουδαῖοι μὲν διαβαλλουσιν, Ἕλληνες δὲ χλευαζουσιν, ἡμεῖς δὲ προσκυνουμεν. De Incarnatione Verbi, Athanasii Opera, vol. i. p. 53.

trine to divulge, he must have taught it in the three years that he spent in that city from 54 to 57; and as the unbelieving Jews were well apprised of all his motions, having laid wait for him on this very journey to Jerusalem, they must have been informed of his having taught this doctrine, and would certainly have carried the news of it to Jerusalem, where many of them attended as well as he at the ensuing feast of Pentecost. But if we attend Paul thither, where we have a very particular account of all the proceedings against him for the space of two years, we shall find no trace of any thing of the kind. All their complaints against him fell far short of this.

What was the occasion of the first clamour against him? Was it not, Acts xxi. 28, *that he taught all men every where against the people, and against the law, and against the temple*, and that he had *brought Greeks into it?* Is it not plain that they had no more serious charge against him? Read his speech to the people, his defence before Felix, and again before Agrippa; you will find no trace of his having taught any doctrine so offensive to the Jews as that of the divinity of Christ must have been. Considering the known prejudices and the inveteracy of the Jews, no reasonable man need desire any clearer proof than this, that neither Paul nor any of the apostles had ever taught the doctrine of the divinity of Christ at that time; and this was so near the time of the wars of the Jews, and the dispersion of that people, that there was no opportunity of preaching it with effect afterwards.

Consider also the conduct of the *Jewish christians*, who had strong prejudices against Paul, as we find in this part of his history; and according to the testimony

of all historians, they retained those prejudices as long as they had any name; and after the destruction of Jerusalem, which was not long after the close of the history of the Acts, no trace can be found of their believing any such doctrine as the divinity of Christ. Now, though their enmity to Paul continued, and they never considered his writings as canonical scripture, yet, to the very last, their objections to him amounted to nothing more than his being no friend to the law of Moses.

The resemblance between the character of the Ebionites, as given by the early christian fathers, and that of the Jewish christians at the time of Paul's last journey to Jerusalem, is very striking. After he had given an account of his conduct to the more intelligent of them, they were satisfied with it; but they thought there would be great difficulty in satisfying others. "Thou seest, brother," say they to him, Acts xxi. 20, "how many thousands of Jews there are who believe, and they are all zealous of the law. And they are informed of thee, that thou teachest all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses; saying that they ought not to circumcise their children, neither to walk after the customs. What is it therefore? The multitudes must needs come together, for they will hear that thou art come. Do therefore this that we say to thee. We have four men who have a vow on them. Them take and purify thyself with them, and be at charges with them, that they may shave their heads, and all may know that those things whereof they were informed concerning thee are nothing, but that thou thyself also walkest orderly, and keepest the law." So great a resemblance in some

things, viz. their attachment to the law, and their prejudices against Paul, cannot but lead us to imagine that they were the same in other respects also, both being equally zealous observers of the law, and equally strangers to the doctrine of the divinity of Christ. And in that age all the Jews were equally zealous for the great doctrine of the *unity of God*, and their *peculiar customs*. Can it be supposed, then, that they would so obstinately retain the one, and so readily abandon the other?

These considerations (and much more might be added to enforce them) certainly affect the credibility of Christ having any nature superior to that of man; and, when they are sufficiently attended to, (as I suspect they never have been,) must shake the Arian hypothesis; but they must be particularly embarrassing to those who, like you, maintain the perfect equality of the Son to the Father.

Considerations of this kind, if they occur to him, no person, who thinks at all, can absolutely neglect, so as to satisfy himself with having no hypothesis on the subject. You certainly find the apostles as well as the rest of the Jews without any knowledge of the divinity of Christ, with whom they lived and conversed as a man; and if they ever became acquainted with it, there must have been a *time* when it was either discovered by them, or made known to them; and the effects of the acquisition, or the communication of extraordinary knowledge, are in general proportionably conspicuous.

Had we had no written history of our Saviour's life, or of the preaching of the apostles, or only some very concise one; still so very extraordinary an article as this

would hardly have been unknown, or have passed unrecorded; much less when the history is so full and circumstantial as it is.

Had there been any pretence for imagining that the Jews in our Saviour's time had any knowledge of the doctrine of the trinity, and that they expected the second person in it in the character of their Messiah, the question I propose to you would have been needless. But nothing can be more evident than that, whatever you may fancy with respect to more ancient times, every notion of the trinity was obliterated from the minds of the Jews in our Saviour's time. It is, therefore, not only a curious but a serious and important question, *When was it introduced*, and *by what steps?* I have answered it on my hypothesis of its being an *innovation* and a *corruption* of the christian doctrine; do you the same on your idea of its being an essential part of it. I am, &c.

LETTER VI.

Of the Personification of the Logos.

DEAR SIR,

HAVING considered all that you have advanced concerning the antiquity of the unitarian doctrine, I proceed to attend to what you observe concerning the *personification of the Logos* by the platonizing christians: for, that many of them did platonize you are far from denying. "If," you say, p. 50, "he hath succeeded no better in the proof of his third assertion,

concerning the platonic christians of the second age, the inventors, as he would have it, of our Lord's divinity; that the divinity which they set up was only of the secondary sort, which was admitted by the Arians, including neither eternity nor any proper necessity of existence; having the mere name of divinity, without any thing of the real form: if the proof of this third assertion should be found to be equally infirm with that of the other two, his notion of the gradual progress of opinions from the mere Unitarian doctrine to the Arian, and from the Arian doctrine to the Athanasian faith, must be deemed a mere dream or fiction in every part."

In the first place I must set you right with respect to my own idea, which you have totally misconceived, though you have undertaken to refute it, and this strange mistake of yours runs through the whole of your work. Those platonizing christians who personified the Logos were not Arians; for their Logos was an attribute of the Father, and not any thing that was created of nothing, as the Arians held Christ to have been. It is well known, as Beausobre observes, that they were not Arians, but the orthodox, that platonized. Constantine, as I have observed, vol. ii. p. 488, in his oration to the fathers of the council of Nice, speaks in commendation of Plato, as having taught the doctrine of a second God, derived from the supreme God, and subservient to his will.

Among the proofs of the origin of the Son, according to the early orthodox writers, I first quoted a passage in Athenagoras, which you translate somewhat differently from me; but not so as to affect my conclusion from it. For he evidently asserts that the Lo-

gos was eternal in God, only because God was always λογικος, *rational*, which entirely excludes proper personification. See Athenagoras, p. 82. Can reason, as it exists in man, be called a person, merely because man is a *rational* being?

Besides, this is the only one of all my authorities that you have thought proper to examine; whereas there are others which you have overlooked so plain and determinate, that it is impossible for you to interpret them otherwise than I have done; as they evidently imply that it depended upon the Father's will that the Logos should have a proper personification, and become a Son, with respect to him. The passages which I have quoted from Tertullian and Lactantius, vol. i. p. 28, whose orthodoxy you cannot question, I call upon you particularly to consider.

There is a passage in Tertullian which shows how ready the platonizing Christians were to revert to the idea of an *attribute* of God in their use of the word *Logos*. "We have said that God made the universe by his *word*, *reason*, and *power*; and it appears that among your philosophers also, the *Logos*, that is, *speech* and *reason*, was the maker of the universe. For this Zeno supposed to be the maker and disposer of all things, that the same is called *fate*, and *God*, and the *mind of Jupiter*, and the *necessity of all things* *." The Platonic trinity, at least the second person in it,

* Jam ediximus Deum universitatem hanc mundi verbo, et ratione, et virtute molitum. Apud vestros quoque sapientes, λογον, id est sermonem, atque rationem, constat artificem videri universitatis. Hunc enim Zeno determinat factitatorem, qui cuncta in dispositione formaverit; eundem et fatum vocari, et deum, et animum Jovis, et necessitatem omnium rerum. Apologeticus, sect. xxi. p. 19.

probably had its origin in personification; and in this the Christians were too ready to follow them, by converting the Logos of St. John into a proper person.

You acknowledge, p. 56, that these writers platonized, and this you say was common to Athenagoras and them all. "If any thing," you say, p. 56, "be justly reprehensible in the notions of the platonic christians, it is this conceit, which seems to be common to Athenagoras, with them all, and is a key to the meaning of many obscure passages in their writings; that the *external display of the powers* of the Son in the business of creation, is the thing intended in the scripture language under the figure of his *generation;* a conceit which seems to have no certain foundation in holy writ, and no authority in the opinions and the doctrines of the preceding age; and it seems to have betrayed some of those who were the most wedded to it into the use of a very improper language; as if a new relation had taken place between the first and the second person, when the creative powers were first exerted."

You add, after apologizing for the conduct of the platonizing fathers, "the conversion of an attribute into a person, whatever Dr. Priestley may imagine, is a notion to which they were entire strangers." I answer that it is not possible, either by the use of plain words, or figures, to express this notion, to which you say they were entire strangers, more clearly than they do. For, according to the most definite language a man can use, the Logos, as existing in the Father, prior to the creation, was, according to them, the same thing in him that *reason* is in *man*, which is certainly no proper *person* distinguishable from the man himself. Will

you say that the *man* is one person or thing, and his *reason* another, not comprehended in the *man?* In like manner it is impossible not to infer from the uniform language of these writers, that, according to their ideas, there was nothing in or belonging to the *Son*, originally, but what was necessarily contained in what they express by the term *Father*. I will add, that if this was not the orthodoxy of the age, there was no orthodoxy in it.

That the *Logos* of the Father, the same that constituted the second person in the trinity, exactly corresponded to the Logos, or reason, or word of man, was the idea of Athanasius himself. Having spoken of the Father, as called the *only God*, because he only is unbegotten, *αγεννητος*, and the *fountain of deity*, *πηγη θεοτητος*, and of the Son as only *God of God*, *θεος εκ θεου*, he says, in answer to the question how this Logos can become a person in God when it does not so in man, "The word conceived in the mind of man does not become *man of man*, since it does not live or subsist, but is only the motion of a living and subsisting heart. When it is pronounced it has no continuance, and being often uttered, does not remain. Whereas the psalmist says the *Word of the Lord remaineth for ever*, and the evangelist agrees with him, &c.*"

"On this subject," you say, p. 58, "it is but jus-

* Ου γαρ ὁ λογος του ανθρωπου ανθρωπος εστι προς ανθρωπον· επει μητε ζων εστι, μητε ὑφεστως, αλλα ζωσης καρδιας και ὑφεστωσης κινημα μονον. και λεγεται παρα χρημα, και ουκ εστι. και πολλακις καλουμενος, ουδε ποτε διαμενει· το δε του θεου λογον ανωθεν, ὁ ψαλμωδος κεκραγει λεγων, Εις τον αιωνα ὁ λογος σου διαμενει εν τῳ ουρανῳ. και συμφωνος αυτῳ ὁ θεον ειναι τον λογον ὁμολογων Ευαγγελιστης, &c. De Æterna Substantia Filii, &c. contra Sabellii Gregales, Opera, vol. i. p. 651.

tice to Dr. Priestley to acknowledge, what indeed he ought to have acknowledged for himself, that in this misinterpretation of the platonic fathers he is not original; that he hath upon his side the respectable authority of two very eminent divines of the Roman church, Petavius and Huetius." Of this, I assure you, Sir, I was quite ignorant; but I see no reason to be ashamed of such company, or of any company, in the cause of truth.

That any mere *external display of powers*, as you say, p. 57, should ever be termed *generation*, is so improbable, from its manifest want of analogy to any thing that ever was called *generation* before or since; that such an abuse of words is not to be supposed of these writers, or of any person, without very positive proof; and in this case you advance nothing but a mere conjecture, destitute of any thing that can give it a colour of probability.

If the Logos had had an actual *personal existence*, with all its proper and separate powers, from all eternity, how could he be said to be *generated*, when he only exerted those powers in a particular way? For since, according to your hypothesis, he was always an intelligent person from the beginning, he must have exerted his intellectual faculties in some way or other from all eternity, as much as the Father himself; and was the exertion of the faculties of the Father in the creation of the world ever called *a generation of the Father*, by those who supposed creation to be a work of his, performed in time, after the lapse of an eternity in which nothing had been created? And yet, according to you, this language must have been equally proper with respect to the Father as with respect to the

Son, both having been intelligent persons from all eternity.

You say, p. 52, "After all that Dr. Priestley hath written about the resemblance between the ecclesiastical and the platonic trinity, he has yet, it seems, to learn, that a *created Logos*, a Logos which had ever not existed, was no less an absurdity in the academy, than it is an impiety in the church. The converts from platonism must have renounced their philosophy before they could be the authors of this absurd, this monstrous opinion. As the notion that this doctrine took its rise with them betrays a total ignorance of the genuine principles of their school, it is easy to foresee that the arguments brought in support of it can only be founded in gross misconstruction of their language."

To this I can only say, that you discover a total ignorance of what I have asserted, and I do not know how to express myself more intelligibly than I have done. I have no where said or supposed that either the Platonists, or the platonizing christians, held that the Logos was created, or that it had ever not existed; but only that, whereas it was originally nothing more than a *property* of the divine mind, it assumed a separate personal character in time. The Logos of the Platonists had, in their opinion, always had a personal existence, because Plato supposed creation to have been eternal; but this was not the opinion of the platonizing christians, who held that the world was not eternal; and therefore, retaining as much of platonism as was consistent with that doctrine, they held that there was a time when the Father was *alone*, and without a son; his Logos or reason being in all that time

the same thing in him that reason now is in man; and of this I have produced abundant evidence.

I cannot close this letter on the *personification of the Logos* without making some observations relating to the first account we have of it.

That Christ had a proper permanent pre-existence, as the *Logos of the Father*, first distinctly appears in the writings of Justin Martyr; and from his labouring the point so much as he does, and especially from his providing a retreat in case he should not be able to prove it, it is most probable that he was the first who started it. However, he also mentions a different opinion on the subject, which probably preceded his own, and paved the way for it; and this was not very remote from the unitarian doctrine.

It was, that the emission of the Logos, as a person, was an occasional thing, and intended to answer particular purposes only; after which it was absorbed into the divine essence again. On this scheme the Logos might have been a real person first at the creation of the world, and again when it was employed in the divine intercourse with the patriarchs, and the children of Israel, in the intervals of which it might have been deprived of its personality; and lastly, have recovered it at the birth of Christ, and have retained it ever after. Whereas, the opinion of Justin was, that, after the first emission of the Logos at the creation of the world, it was never again absorbed into the divine essence.

"There are," says he* (to abridge what he says on this subject) "I know, who are of opinion, that the power, δυναμιν, which proceeded from the Father of

* Dialogi pars secunda, edit. Thirlby, p. 412.

all, and appeared to Moses, or to Abraham, or to Jacob, and which, in different circumstances, was called an *angel*, a *glory*, or a *man*, remained a power inseparable from the Father*, just as a beam of light is inseparable from the sun †, which is in the heavens, and which, when it sets, it carries along with it. Thus the Father, whenever he pleases, they say, makes this power to come out of him, προπηδαν; and whenever he wills, he calls it back into himself again. And in the same manner they say he makes angels. But that angels are permanent beings, I have already shown; and that this power, which the prophets call *God*, and an *angel*, is not like a beam of light, but remains numerically distinct from its source, I have shown at large; observing that this power, δυναμιν, is produced by the power and will of the Father, but not so as that the Father loses any thing by its emission, but as one fire is lighted by another—It is called *Lord* in the history of the destruction of Sodom, and rained fire from that Lord who was in heaven, and who was the Lord of that Lord who was on earth, as his Father and God; being the cause of his being, of his being powerful, and of his being Lord, and God ‡."

We see in this passage in how plausible a manner, and how little likely to alarm men of plain understandings, was the doctrine of the divinity of Christ as it was first proposed. At first it was nothing more than

* Ατμητον δε και αχωριστον του πατρος ταυτην την δυναμιν υπαρχειν. p. 412.

† A beam of light was then imagined to be something connected with the sun, and not matter emitted from him, and not returning to him.

‡ Ος και του επι γης Κυριου Κυριος εστιν, ως πατηρ και θεος, αιτιος τε αυτω του ειναι και δυνατω και κυριω και θεω. p. 413.

the *divine power*, occasionally personified, (a small step indeed, if any, from pure unitarianism,) and afterwards acquiring permanent personality; but still dependent upon the will of God, from whence it proceeded, and entirely subservient to him; which was very different from what is now conceived concerning the second person in the trinity. I am, &c.

LETTER VII.

Considerations relating to the Doctrine of the Trinity.

DEAR SIR,

I CANNOT help, in this place, making a few remarks on some of your observations with respect to the doctrine of the *trinity*, your ideas of which appear to be those which are commonly termed *Athanasian;* implying a perfect equality in all the three persons. Indeed, as a strenuous advocate for the church of England, they can be no other.

I.

"The advantage," you say, p. 69. "to be expected from these deep researches, is not any insight into the manner in which the three divine persons are united; a knowledge which is indeed too high for a man, perhaps for angels; which in our present condition at least is not to be attained, and ought not to be sought. But that just apprehension of the christian doctrine which will show that it is not one of those things that 'no miracles can prove' will be the certain fruit of the studies recommended. They will lead us to see the

scripture doctrine in its true light: that it is an imperfect discovery, not a contradiction."

A *contradiction*, you acknowledge, p. 67. is that "a part is equal to the whole, or that the same thing, in the same respect, is at the same time one and many." This you admit that nothing can prove. "No testimony," you say, "that a contradiction *is*, should be allowed to overpower the intuitive conviction that it *cannot be*. An inquiry, therefore, into the reasonableness of our faith, as well as just views of its history, is of great importance."

Now I ask, Wherein does the Athanasian doctrine of the trinity differ from a contradiction, as you have defined it? It asserts, in effect, that nothing is wanting to either the Father, the Son, or the Spirit, to constitute each of them truly and properly God; each being equal in eternity and all divine perfections; and yet that these three are not *three Gods*, but only *one God*. They are, therefore, both *one* and *many* in the same respect, viz. in each being *perfect God*. This is certainly as much a contradiction as to say that Peter, James, and John, having each of them every thing that is requisite to constitute a complete man, are yet, all together, not *three men*, but only *one man*. For the ideas annexed to the words *God* or *man* cannot make any difference in the nature of the two propositions. After the council of Nice, there are instances of the doctrine of the trinity being explained in this very manner. The fathers of that age being particularly intent on preserving the full *equality* of the three persons, they entirely lost sight of their proper *unity*. And explain this doctrine as you will, one of these things must ever be sacrificed to the other.

II.

Notwithstanding what I have quoted from you above, you seem to countenance some sort of *explanation* of the doctrine of the trinity. "The sense" [viz. of Athenagoras] you say, p. *55*. "is, that the personal existence of a divine Logos is implied in the very idea of a God. And the argument rests on a principle which was common to all the platonic fathers, and seems to be founded in scripture, that the existence of the Son flows necessarily from the divine intellect exerted on itself, from the Father's contemplation of his own perfections. But as the Father ever was, his perfections have ever been, and his intellect has been ever active. But perfections which have ever been, the ever active intellect must ever have contemplated; and the contemplation which has ever been, must ever have been accompanied with its just effect, the personal existence of the Son."

I wish you had shown what it is in the scriptures, or indeed in the fathers, that gives any countenance to this curious piece of reasoning; and in your reply to me I hope you will not fail to point it out. In the mean time, as we cannot pretend to draw any conclusions from the necessary operations of *one mind*, but from their supposed analogy to those of *other minds*, that is *our own*, you will find yourself embarrassed with a difficulty similar to that of Tertullian, Lactantius, and Athanasius; and must explain to us how it comes to pass, that if the contemplation of the divine perfections of the Father necessarily produced a distinct person in him, fully equal to himself, a *man's* contemplation of such perfections, or powers, as he is

possessed of, should not produce another intelligent person fully equal to himself?

You will, perhaps, say (though you can have nothing to authorize it) that the impossibility of producing this in man, is the imperfection of his faculties, or his limited power of contemplating them. But to cut off that subterfuge, I will ask, why the contemplation of the Son's perfections, which you suppose to be fully equal to those of the Father, and whose energy of contemplation you must likewise suppose equal to that of the Father, does not produce another intelligent being equal to himself; and why are not *persons in the Godhead*, in this manner, multiplied *ad infinitum?* If, for any incomprehensible reason, this mysterious *power of generation* be peculiar to the Father, why does it not still operate? Is he not an unchangeable being, the same now that he was from the beginning, his perfections the same, and his power of contemplating them the same? Why then are not more sons produced? Is he become ἀγονος, incapable of this generation, as the orthodox fathers used to ask? Or does it depend upon his *will* and *pleasure*, whether he will exert this power of generation? If so, is not the Son as much a *creature*, depending on the will of the creator, as any thing else produced by him, though in another manner; and this whether he be of the same substance, ὁμοουσιος, with him, or not?

I should also like to know in what manner the *third person* in the trinity was produced. Was it by the joint exertion of the two first, in the contemplation of their respective perfections? If so, why does not the same operation in them produce a *fourth?* &c. &c. &c.

Admitting, however, this strange account of the ge-

neration of the trinity, (equal in absurdity to any thing in the Jewish cabala,) viz. that the personal existence of the Son necessarily flows from the intellect of the Father exerted on itself, it certainly implies a virtual *priority* or *superiority* in the Father with respect to the Son; and no being can be properly *God* who has any *superior*. In short, your scheme effectually overturns the doctrine of the proper *equality* as well as that of the *unity* of the three persons in the trinity.

Indeed, Sir, had you lived in some former ticklish times, when words were more narrowly watched than they are now, I think you would have run some risk of being accused of heresy, for thus boldly making the second person in the trinity to be nothing more than *an effect*, though the necessary effect of the Father's contemplation of his own perfections. Far from this was Dr. Waterland, and all the strict Athanasians of the last age. They maintained that the trinity consisted of three persons, all *truly independent* of each other. It is, indeed, very amusing to observe how many totally discordant opinions, schemes as distant from each other as light and darkness, all pass for *orthodoxy* in this heedless age; in which we have no councils, synods, or convocations, to watch over the faith. Error itself is hardly more various than modern truth.

III.

You cannot but acknowledge that the proper object of prayer is God the Father, whom you call the first person in the trinity. Indeed, you cannot find in the scriptures any *precept* that will authorize us to address ourselves to any other person, nor any proper *example* of it. Every thing that you can allege to this purpose,

as Stephen's short ejaculatory address to Christ, whom he had just before seen in vision, &c. is very inconsiderable. Our Saviour himself always prayed to his Father, and with as much humility and resignation as the most dependent being in the universe could possibly do; always addressing him as his *father*, or the *author of his being*; and he directs his disciples to pray to the same great being, *whom only*, he says, *we ought to serve.*

Had he intended to guard against all mistake on this subject, by speaking of God as the author of his being, *in the same sense* in which he is the author of being to all men, he could not have done it more expressly than he has, by calling him his father and our father, his God and our God. At the same time he calls his disciples his *brethren* *. *Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my father and your father, to my God and your God.* Can you, Sir, read this, and say that we unitarians wrest the scriptures, and are not guided by the plain sense of them?

Accordingly, the practice of praying to the Father only, was long universal in the christian church; the short addresses to Christ, as those in the Litany, *Lord, have mercy on us, Christ, have mercy on us*, being comparatively of late date. In the Clementine liturgy, the oldest that is extant, contained in the Apostolical Constitutions which were probably composed about the fourth century, there is no trace of any such thing. Origen, in a large treatise on the subject of prayer, urges very forcibly the propriety of praying to the Father only, and not to Christ; and as he gives no hints that the public forms

* John xx. 17.

of prayer had any thing reprehensible in them in that respect, we are naturally led to conclude that, in his time, such petitions to Christ were unknown in the public assemblies of christians; and such hold have early established customs on the minds of men, that, excepting the Moravians only, whose prayers are always addressed to Christ, the general practice of trinitarians themselves is to pray to the Father only.

Now please, Sir, to consider on what *principle* could this early and universal practice have been founded. What is there in your doctrine of a trinity, consisting of three equal persons, to entitle the *Father* to that distinction more than the Son or the Spirit? I doubt not but that, considering the thing *ab initio*, you yourself would have thought that, since of these three persons it is the *second* that was the *maker of the world* and that is the *immediate governor of it*, he is that person of the three with whom *we have most to do;* and therefore he is that person to whom our prayers ought to be addressed. This, I should think, would have been a natural conclusion, even if Christ had not been thought to be equal to the Father, but only the maker and the governor of the world under him; supposing him to have had power originally given him equal to the making and governing of it, as I have shown at large in my Disquisitions on Matter and Spirit, vol. i. p. 376. For we should naturally look up to that being on whom we immediately depend, knowing that it must be his proper province to attend to us.

If there should have been any reason in the nature of things, though undiscoverable and incomprehensible by us, why the world should have been made and supported by some being of communicated power and

delegated authority, rather than by the self-existent and supreme being himself, (and if the fact be so, there must have been some good reason for it,) that unknown reason, whatever it be, naturally presents this derived being to us as the proper object of our prayers. And I must observe once more, that a derived preexistent being, supposed to animate the body of Jesus, and who is not also the maker of the world, is a creature of imagination only, whose existence is not to be inferred, with the least colourable pretext, from the scriptures. If the sacred writers do represent Christ as having preexisted at all, they certainly suppose him to be the maker of all things. Let those, therefore, who pretend to maintain the Arian hypothesis either assert it in its original and proper extent, or else abandon it altogether.

But supposing this second person in the trinity to be our independent maker, governor, and final judge, the propriety of praying to him, and to him exclusively, is so obvious, that no consideration whatever could have prevented the practice, if such had been the real belief of the christian world from the beginning. That christians did not do so at first, but prayed habitually to the Father only, is therefore with me almost a demonstration that they did not consider Christ in that light; but that, whatever they might think of him, they did not regard him as being a proper *object of worship*, and consequently not as possessed of the attributes that are proper to constitute him one, and therefore not as truly *God*. The persuasion that he was truly God, and that God on whom we immediately depend, would unavoidably have drawn after it the habitual practice of praying to him, as it has at length

effected with respect to the Moravians; and in spite of constant usage, and against all scripture precept and example, the practice has more or less prevailed with all trinitarians. Petrarch, we find by his *Letters*, generally prayed to Christ; that pious treatise of Thomas-a-Kempis, On the *imitation of Christ*, consists of nothing besides addresses to him, and they compose the greater part of the *litany* in the Church of England.

When I was myself a trinitarian, I remember praying conscientiously to all the three persons without distinction, only beginning with the Father; and what I myself did in the serious simplicity of my heart, when young, would, I doubt not, have been done by all christians from the beginning, if their minds had then been impressed, as mine was, with the firm persuasion that all the three persons were fully equal in power, wisdom, goodness, omnipresence, and all divine attributes. This argument I recommend to your serious consideration, as it is with me a sufficient proof that, originally, Christ was not considered as a proper object of worship by christians, and consequently neither as God, nor as the maker or governor of the world under God.

IV.

I wish you would reflect a little on the subject, and then inform us what there is in the doctrine of the trinity, *in itself considered*, that can recommend it as a part of a system of religious truth. All that can be said for it is, that the doctrine, however improbable in itself, is necessary to explain some particular texts of scripture; and that, if it had not been for those particular texts, we should have found no want of it. For

there is neither any fact in *nature*, nor any one purpose of *morals*, (which are the object and end of all religion,) that requires it.

Is not one self-existent, almighty, infinitely wise, and perfectly good being fully equal to the production of all things, and also to the support and government of the worlds which he has made? A second person in the godhead cannot be really wanted for this purpose, as far as we can conceive.

Whatever may be meant by the *redemption of the world*, is not the being who made it equal to that also? If his creatures offend him, and by repentance and reformation become the proper objects of his forgiveness, is it not more natural to suppose that he has *within himself* a power of forgiving them, and of restoring them to his favour, without the strange expedient of another person, fully equal to himself, condescending to animate a human body, and dying for us? We never think of any similar expedient in order to forgive, with the greatest propriety and effect, offences committed by our children against ourselves.

Whatever you suppose to be the use of a *third person* in the trinity, is not the influence of the first person sufficient for that also? The descent of the holy spirit upon the apostles was to enable them to work miracles. But when our Saviour was on earth, *the Father within him*, and acting by him, did the same thing.

You also cannot deny that, exclusive of some particular texts, the general tenor of scripture does not suppose such a trinity as you contend for. Is it not the general tenor of the Old and New Testament, that the supreme God himself, and not any other person

acting under him, was the proper maker of the world; and that he himself, and not any other being, supports and governs it? Is not the same great being, the God and Father of us all, and even the *God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*, represented as forgiving the sins of his penitent offspring *freely*, and exhorting us to forgive as we ourselves hope to be forgiven? And are we to require any ransom, recompense, or atonement, of a penitent brother?

You will say that there are obscure intimations of the doctrine of the trinity in the Old Testament, as in God's saying *Let us make man*, and *Let us go down and confound their language*, &c. But even that literal interpretation of these expressions which you contend for does not really favour your hypothesis. For then there must have been at least *two persons* concerned in making the world, and also two or more persons must have had that intercourse with mankind, which you say was the province of the second person in the trinity only.

The plural number forming the regal style in the East, furnishes a very easy explanation of all such texts as these; especially considering that the word denoting *God* in Hebrew is in the plural number.

Why then, dear Sir, should you be so desirous of retaining such a doctrine as this of the trinity, which you must acknowledge has an uncouth appearance, has always confounded the best reason of mankind, and drives us to the undesirable doctrine of *inexplicable mysteries*,—to the great offence of Jews, Mahometans, and unbelievers in general,—without some urgent necessity? Of two difficulties we are always authorized to choose the least; and why should we risk the whole

of christianity for the sake of so unnecessary and undesirable a part?

Try, then, whether you cannot hit upon some method or other of reconciling a few particular texts, not only with *common sense*, but also with the general and the obvious tenor of the *scriptures themselves*. In this you will, no doubt, find some difficulty at first, from the effect of early impressions and association of ideas; but an attention to the true idiom of the scripture language, with such helps as you may want, but will easily find, for the purpose, will satisfy you, that the doctrine of the trinity furnishes no proper clue to the right understanding of those texts, but will only serve to mislead you.

In the mean time, this doctrine of the trinity wears so disagreeable an aspect, that I think every reasonable man must say, with the excellent Archbishop Tillotson with respect to the Athanasian creed, "I wish we were well rid of it." This is not setting up reason against the scriptures, but reconciling reason with the scriptures, and the scriptures with themselves. On your scheme they are irreconcilably at variance.

V.

In a mode of writing altogether improper in a serious discourse, you ridicule the Socinian interpretations of scripture as unnatural, and contrary to their obvious meaning; and after a long enumeration of things, which you say *may be clear to my apprehension*, but which you insinuate can never be clear to the apprehension of any man, you add, p. 14. "But to others, who have not sagacity to discern that the true meaning of an inspired writer must be the reverse of

the natural and obvious sense of the expressions which he employs, the force of the conclusion, that the primitive christians could not believe our Lord to be more than a mere man, because the apostles had told them that he was the creator of the universe, will be little understood."

In answer to this, which I suppose you intended for *irony*, and which I shall not endeavour to retort, I shall content myself with taking the very text which you produce as the most difficult for an unitarian to reconcile to his opinion, and show you expressions in it which it is absolutely impossible for you to accommodate to your own principles, without, to adopt your own language, "making the true meaning of the writer the very reverse of the natural and obvious sense of the expressions which he employs."

The passage, which is of your own selection, is Col. i. 15, &c. in which Paul affirms that Christ is the *image of the invisible God*, and *the first-born of every creature;* and yet you make him not the *image* of God, but *God himself*, and so far from being a *creature*, that he is the *creator of all things*. Produce any Socinian interpretation of a text of scripture more directly contrary to its obvious meaning, if you can. Whatever difficulty an unitarian may find in accommodating the latter part of the passage to his sentiments, you must find much more to accommodate the former part to the Athanasian doctrine. And I will venture to say, that for one text in which you can pretend to find any thing harsh or difficult to me, I will engage to produce ten that must create more difficulty to you.

How strangely must you torture the plainest lan-

guage, and in which there is not a shadow of *figure*, to interpret to your purpose, 1 Tim. ii. 5. *There is one God, and one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus;* 1 Cor. viii. 6. *To us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him*; or that expression of our Saviour himself, John xvii. 3. *That they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.* Never upbraid us unitarians with torturing the scriptures, while you have these and a hundred other plain texts to strain at, and bend to your Athanasian hypothesis; besides many *general arguments*, from reason and the scriptures, of more real force than any particular texts, to answer.

VI.

There is something inexplicable, and not to be accounted for, in the conduct of several of the evangelists, indeed all of them, upon the supposition of their having entertained the same sentiments concerning Christ that you do. Each of the gospels was certainly intended to be a sufficient instruction in the fundamental principles of the doctrine of christianity. But there is nothing that can be called an account of the divine or even the super-angelic nature of Christ in the gospels of Matthew, Mark, or Luke; and allowing that there may be some colour for it in the introduction of the gospel of John, it is remarkable that there are many passages in his gospel which are decisively in favour of his simple humanity.

Now these evangelists could not imagine that either the Jews or the Gentiles, for whose use the gospels

were written, would stand in no need of information on a subject of so much importance, and which was so very remote from the apprehensions of them both; and which would at the same time have so effectually covered the *reproach of the cross*, which was continually objected to the christians of that age. If the doctrine of the trinity be true, it is, no doubt, in the highest degree important and interesting. Since, therefore, the evangelists give no certain and distinct account of it, and say nothing of its importance, it may be safely inferred that it was unknown to them.

Why was not the doctrine of the *trinity* taught as explicitly, and in as definite a manner, in the New Testament at least, as the doctrine of the divine *unity* is taught in both the Old and New Testaments, if it be a truth? And why is the doctrine of the *unity* always delivered in so unguarded a manner, and without any exception made in favour of the trinity, to prevent any mistake with respect to it, as is always now done in our orthodox catechisms, creeds, and discourses on the subject? For you cannot deny but the doctrine of the trinity looks so like an infringement of that of the unity, on which the greatest possible stress is always laid in the scriptures, that it required to be at least hinted at, if not well defined and explained, when the divine unity was spoken of. You are content, however, to build so strange and inexplicable a doctrine as that of the trinity upon mere inferences from casual expressions, and cannot pretend to one clear, express, and unequivocal lesson on the subject.

There are many, very many passages of scripture, which inculcate the doctrine of the divine unity in the clearest and strongest manner. Produce one such pas-

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They certainly saw and conversed with him at first on the supposition of his being a man as much as themselves. Of this there can be no doubt. Their surprise, therefore, upon being informed that he was not a man, but really God, or even the maker of the world under God, would be just as great as ours would now be on discovering that any of our acquaintance, or at least a very good man and a prophet, was in reality God, or the maker of the world. Let us consider then how we should feel, how we should behave towards such a person, and how we should speak of him afterwards. No one, I am confident, would ever call *that being a man,* after he was convinced that he was *God.* He would always speak of him in a manner suitable to his proper rank.

Suppose [illegible] any two men of our acquaintance [illegible] on examination, to be the angels *Michael*

and *Gabriel*, should we ever after this call them *men?* Certainly not. But we should naturally say to our friends, "Those two persons whom we took to be men are not *men*, but *angels in disguise*." This language would be natural. Had Christ, therefore, been any thing more than man before he came into the world, and especially had he been God, or the maker of the world, he never could have been, or have been considered as being, *a man*, while he was in it; for he could not divest himself of his superior and proper nature. However *disguised*, he would always, in fact, have been whatever he had been before, and would have been so *styled* by all who truly knew him.

Least of all would Christ have been considered as a man in *reasoning* and *argumentation*, though his external appearance should have so far put men off their guard as to lead them to give him that appellation. Had the apostle Paul considered Christ as being any thing more than a man with respect to his *nature*, he could never have urged, with the least propriety or effect, *that as by man came death, so by man came also the resurrection of the dead.* For it might have been unanswerably replied, "This is not the case: for indeed by man comes death; but not by man, but by God, or the creator of man under God, comes the resurrection of the dead."

VIII.

There is also another consideration which I would recommend to you who maintain that Christ was either God, or the maker of the world under God. It is this. The manner in which our Lord speaks of himself, and of the power by which he worked miracles, is inconsistent, according to the common construction

of language, with the idea of his being possessed of any proper power of his own, more than other men had.

If Christ was the maker of the world, and if in the creation he exerted no power but what properly belonged to himself, and what was as much *his own* as the power of speaking or walking belongs to man, (though depending ultimately upon that supreme power in which we all live, and move, and have our being,) he could not with any propriety, and without knowing that he must be misunderstood, have said that *of himself he could do nothing*, that the *words which he spake were not his own*, and that *the Father within him did the works*. For if any ordinary man, doing what other men usually do, should apply this language to himself, and say that it was not he that spake or acted, but God who spake and acted by him, and that otherwise he was not capable of so speaking or acting at all, we should not scruple to say that his language was either sophistical, or else downright false or blasphemous.

If this conclusion would be just upon the supposition that Christ had created all things, working miracles by a power properly his own, though derived ultimately from God, much more force has it on the supposition of his working miracles by a power not derived from any being whatever, but as much originally in himself as the power of the Father *.

* That Christ was not the real maker of the world, but God the Father only, without the aid or instrumentality of any other being whatever, is abundantly evident from the scriptures. For a most satisfactory proof of this I refer my readers to Mr. Lindsey's Sequel to his Apology, ch. ix. p. 451.

If it be said that this great pre-existent being was divested of his former powers when he became man, it may be asked, What use was there of such a being? Why might not a mere man have answered the purpose, if this superior being must be reduced to the state of man, in order to act his part on earth with propriety?

It would also be a shocking abuse of language, and would warrant any kind of deception and imposition, if Christ could be supposed to say *that his Father was greater than he*, and at the same time secretly mean only *his human nature*, whereas his divine nature was at the same time fully equal to that of the Father. Upon the same principle a man might say that Christ never suffered, that he never died, or rose again from the dead, meaning his divine nature only, and not his human. Indeed, Sir, there is no use in language, nor any guard against deception, if such liberties as these are to be allowed.

IX.

You must, Sir, be much at a loss indeed for arguments in support of your doctrine of the trinity, when you look for any thing like it in heathen antiquity. "The notion of a trinity," you say, p. 44. "more or less removed from the purity of the christian faith, is found to be a leading principle in all the ancient schools of philosophy, and in the religions of almost all nations; and traces of an early popular belief of it appear even in the abominable rites of idolatrous worship. Their information concerning it," you say, p. 45. "could only be drawn from tradition, founded upon earlier revelations," (meaning than those of Moses,) "from the scattered fragments of the ancient patriarchal creed, that creed which was universal before the defection of the first idolaters, which the corruptions of idolatry, gross and enormous as they were, could never totally obliterate. Thus the doctrine of the trinity is rather confirmed than discredited by the suffrage of the heathen sages; since the resemblance of the christian faith and the pagan philosophy in this article, when

fairly interpreted, appears to be nothing less than the consent of the latest and earliest revelations."

Without troubling you with any remarks upon the "joint worship of Jupiter, Juno, and Minerva, the triad," as you call them, "of the Roman capitol," or the THREE MIGHTY ONES, in Samothrace, to which you say, p. 44. they may be traced; and the worship of which in that place you suppose, with Eusebius, to be earlier than the days of Abraham; I say, without troubling you with any remarks upon this most obscure part of heathen mythology, concerning which there are many opinions, and yours I think the least probable of them all, I will only ask you three questions, to which I beg your explicit answer.

First, If there be so many traces of the doctrine of the trinity in the heathen philosophy, and in the heathen worship, why are there no more of them to be found in the Jewish scriptures and in the Jewish worship? Secondly, If there be such traces of the doctrine of the trinity in the Jewish writings and worship, how came the Jews in our Saviour's time, and also the body of the Jewish nation to this day, not to discover these traces? Thirdly, If the Jews had been once in the possession of this knowledge, but had lost it in the time of our Saviour, why did not he, who rectified other abuses, rectify this, the most important of them all? Tertullian was so far from imagining that the worship of the trinity was known to the Jews, that, as I have observed, vol. i. p. 60, he makes the knowledge of the trinity peculiar to the christian dispensation. The same was the opinion of Athanasius, and I believe the fathers in general.

As to the trinity of Plato, whatever you or I may

know, or may not know, concerning it, it was certainly a thing very unlike your Athanasian doctrine; for it was never imagined that the three component members of that trinity were either *equal* to each other, or strictly speaking *one*.

Every attempt that has yet been made to *explain* the doctrine of the trinity I scruple not to call an insult on the common sense of mankind. When I read that of yours mentioned above, viz. that the Father is the fountain of deity, and that the second person in the trinity was produced by the first person contemplating his own perfections, I can hardly help fancying that I am got back into the very darkest of the dark ages, or at least that I am reading Peter Lombard, Thomas Aquinas, or Duns Scotus.

You speak of the *catholic doctrine of the trinity*. There is also, Sir, a catholic doctrine of *transubstantiation*; and if you would try your skill, you would find that, with the same kind of arguments, from reason and scripture, you would be just as able an advocate for the one as you are for the other. The learned catholics at the time of the Reformation thought that they trod on as firm and as sure ground in defending the latter, as you now do in defending the former. The two doctrines are so nearly akin, that they cannot bear a long separation. They differ only in this, that the doctrine of transubstantiation implies a *physical impossibility*, whereas that of the trinity, as unfolded in the Athanasian creed, implies a *mathematical* one; and to this only we usually give the name of *contradiction*.

I am truly concerned to find by your Charge, published at the request of the respectable body of Clergy

to whom it was delivered, that the doctrine of a trinity, in its most objectionable form, must be maintained at all events by the proper members of the church of England as its most sacred palladium. Other divines of your church have attempted to explain and palliate it, so that it might be hoped that, in time, it would have been explained away and lost, and at length have been struck out of your articles and forms of worship; whereas now, it seems, it is to be maintained in all its rigour; and as you recommend the writings of Bishop Bull, without exception, I presume you approve of his Defence of the *damnatory clause* in the Athanasian creed, (indeed you mention this among his most valuable works,) and this in my opinion is going back into all the darkness and horror of popery. But as you cannot bring back those *times*, your damnatory clauses and excommunications will now have little effect. Yet, as there are liberal sentiments in your performance, I am willing to hope that, on re-consideration, you will, at least, retract your recommendation of *that* piece of your favourite author.

However, next to the church's reforming itself in this important article, it is to be wished by all the true friends of reformation, that your *terms of communion*, p. 71, may be universally understood and adhered to; for then I am confident that a majority of the thinking clergy, whose sentiments on this subject are in general, I believe, those of Dr. Clarke, or Arian, and many of them Socinian, would quit your communion at once. And in that case I have little doubt but that the characters and abilities of those *ejected clergy* would be found to be such as you could not now bear the want

of; and then either a reformation, *invitâ ecclesiâ*, or a total dissolution of the hierarchy, would immediately follow. I am, &c.

LETTER VIII.

Miscellaneous Articles.

I.

DEAR SIR,

To vindicate Eusebius, or his author, in asserting that Theodotus was the first who advanced the doctrine of Christ being a mere man, you say, p. 37, "that Theodotus in this article so far surpassed the earlier heresiarchs, that the merit of being the inventor of the mere humanity, in the precise and full meaning of the words, is with great propriety and truth ascribed to him. When the Cerinthians and the Ebionites affirmed that Jesus had no existence previous to Mary's conception, and that he was literally and physically the carpenter's son, it might justly be said of them, that they asserted the mere humanity of the Redeemer; especially as it could not be foreseen that the impiety would ever go a greater length than this, of ascribing to him an origin merely human. These heretics however went no further, as I conceive, than to deny our Lord's original divinity: they admitted I know not what unintelligible exaltation of his nature, which took place, as they conceived, upon his ascension, by which he became no less the object of worship than if his nature had been originally divine."

This, as far as I know, is advanced on your own authority only. I desire to know where you find that the Ebionites paid any kind of adoration to Christ after he was ascended to heaven, more than Theodotus did. As the extraordinary power communicated to Christ while he was on earth did not make his *nature* more than human, so neither could any power conferred upon him after his ascension; and if God alone is the proper object of worship, Christ, being still *not God*, is as improper an object of worship now as he was before. If any ancient unitarians worshipped Christ after his ascension (of which I believe there is no evidence), Theodotus might do it, and the Ebionites might not, for any thing that appears to the contrary. Socinus prayed to Christ, though he considered him as a mere man, in his present exalted state.

As to your supposition that Theodotus might be the first person who taught the unitarian doctrine in Rome, which is a second plea which you advance for the credit of Eusebius, he himself says nothing about it. And as Tertullian says that in his time the unitarians were the *greater part of the believers*, it is highly improbable that there should be none of them at Rome, where there was a conflux of all religions and of all sects.

You here speak of the *impiety* of the unitarians. Before you repeat any expressions of this kind, I beg you would pause a little, and consider how such language might be retorted upon yourself. If it be impiety to reduce a God to the state of a man, is it not equally impious to raise any man to a state of equality with God,—that God who has declared that he will not give his glory to another, who has no equal, and who

in this respect styles himself a jealous God? This you may say respects the gods of the heathens. But what were the heathen gods but either the sun, moon, and stars, or dead men, all creatures of God, and deriving their power from him? And if Christ be not *God*, he must be a creature of God too; for there can be no medium between creature and creator.

I do not call it impiety in you, but it sounds unpleasantly in my ears, to apply, as you do, the term *holy Father* to Athanasius. The catholics, I believe, apply it to Ignatius Loyola. Our Saviour applied it to his God and Father, and I wish it had always remained so appropriated. It is high time to drop that style, even with respect to a more holy man than Athanasius was.

II.

In a work of great variety and extent I was well aware that I could not expect to escape all oversights; but I was confident they could not be of much consequence. The expectation has been verified in both its parts. You have set me right with respect to the exactness of two of my *quotations*; and I should have thanked you for it if you had noted the oversights with good nature, which would have done you no discredit, and might not have lessened the weight of your animadversions.

But in some of the cases in which you pretend to set me right, you are much more mistaken than I have been. This is particularly the case with respect to your censure of Dr. Clarke and myself, concerning the *piety* ascribed to the ancient unitarians by Origen. I have lately procured the original, and I appeal to our readers whether you have not misrepresented the fact, and not Dr. Clarke or myself.

You say, p. 34, that "Origen says, not that they were pious, but that they boasted that they were pious, or affected piety. Piety," you add, "and the affectation of piety, belong to opposite characters." According to you, therefore, Origen considered these unitarians as impious persons, the very reverse of pious. But if the passage be carefully inspected, it will appear that Origen, notwithstanding he uses the word ευχομενους, was far from representing these ancient unitarians as only *pretending to piety*, and *boasting* of it; but considered them as persons who really dreaded lest, by admitting Christ to be God, they should infringe upon the honour that was due to the Father only.

"By these means," he says, "may be explained that which greatly disturbs many persons, who plead a principle of piety, and who fear to make two Gods*." He afterwards recurs to the same subject, and introduces it as an objection of persons with whom he would not trifle, and whom he was far from charging with hypocrisy. "But since," he says, "it is probable that many may be offended, because we say that one is the true God, namely the Father, and besides this true God there are many who are made Gods by participation; fearing that the glory of him who excels all creatures should be brought down to that of others who attained the appellation of Gods, &c.†" On the whole, therefore, I think that Origen must have thought as respectfully of these early unitarians as I

* Και το πολλους φιλόθεους ειναι ευχομενους ταρασσον, ευλαβουμενους δυο αναγορευσαι θεους. Comment. in Johannem, edit. Huetii, 1668, vol. ii. p. 46. D.

† Αλλ' επει εικος προσκοψειν τινας τοις ειρημενοις, ένος μεν αληθινου θεου του πατρος απαγγελλομενου, παρα δε τον αληθινον θεον θεων πλειονων τη μετοχη του θεου γινομενων, ευλαβουμενους την του πασαν κτισιν ὑπερεχοντος δοξαν εξισωσαι τοις λοιποις της θεος προσηγοριας τυγχανουσι, &c. Ibid. p. 47. C.

had represented him to do, and that he really considered them as objecting to the doctrine of the divinity of Christ from the very best principles.

In translating the passage in Theophilus, in which mention is made of God's speaking to nothing but his own *word* and *wisdom*, I inadvertently used the particle *or* for *and*, as you observe, p. 48; but I do not see how the right translation is at all less favourable to my argument, as it may still be interpreted of God's speaking, as it were, to *himself*, or to *his own attributes*, and by no means necessarily implies that the *word* and *wisdom* of God were distinct persons. However, I have other instances in proof of what I have advanced that are not liable to any charge of ambiguity, which it therefore behoved you to consider.

I also mistranslated a sentence in Theophilus, concerning his *trinity*. It was in consequence of his using a singular verb instead of a plural; but I have no doubt of your translation, p. 59, being right, and shall adopt it. I am still, however, fully satisfied, that neither Theophilus nor any person of his age made a proper *trinity of persons in the Godhead*; for they had no idea of the perfect equality of the second and third persons to the first.

You say, p. 61, "that they scrupled not to ascribe an equal divinity to all the three persons." If by *equal divinity* you mean something that might be equally called *divine*, though in a different sense, I admit it; but that will make nothing for *your* trinity. And that the fathers before the Council of Nice asserted, in the most explicit manner, the superiority of the Father to the Son, see my third section, in which you will find unanswerable proof of it.

Whenever the Antenicene fathers used the term *God* absolutely, they always meant the Father only, as you do not deny. But if in their idea the Father had been no more entitled to the appellation of God than the Son, or the Spirit, they would certainly have confined the use of the word God to express *divinity in general,* and have used the word *Father*, and not *God*, when they really meant the Father only, exclusively of the two other persons. Had there been no proper correlative to the word *Son*, as a person, your explanation might have been attended to; but since the term *Father* is perfectly correlative to the term *Son*, and as familiar, it would certainly have been used by them to denote the Father, as well as the term Son to denote the Son. It is natural, therefore, to conclude that their custom of using the term God to denote the Father only, was derived to them from earlier times, in which no other than the Father was deemed to be God in any proper sense of the word. This language was continued long after, from a change of ideas, it ceased to be proper.

Very happily the word God is still, in common use, appropriated to the Father, so that none but professed theologians are habitually trinitarians, and probably not even these at all times; and while the scriptures are read without the comments of men, the Father alone will be considered as God, and the sole object of worship, exclusively of the Son or the Spirit. But while a different doctrine is taught in christian schools, and continually held up to the world in the writings of christian divines, those who are not christians, and who will not take the pains to study the scriptures themselves, must receive a very unfavourable impression of

our religion; and the manifest absurdity and impiety of our doctrine will effectually prevent its reception by them. I therefore think it of the greatest consequence to christianity, that this doctrine of the trinity (which I consider as one of its most radical corruptions) should be renounced in the most open and unequivocal manner by all those whose minds are so far enlightened as to be convinced that it is a corruption and an innovation in the christian doctrine, the reverse of what it was in its primitive purity; and that they should exert themselves to enlighten the minds of others.

I am, &c.

THE CONCLUDING LETTER.

DEAR SIR,

I HAVE now finished my reply to your animadversions on my History, omitting nothing that I think to be of any consequence to your argument. If you should think that I have overlooked any thing material, and please to point it out to me, I will answer it as explicitly as I can; for I hope that this will only be the beginning of our correspondence on the subject, as I would gladly discuss it with you in the fullest manner.

I only wish for your own sake, and for the more advantageous investigation of the truth, that you would drop that sarcastic manner of writing, which is so conspicuous in the greater part of your performance, and I should think peculiarly improper for the occasion on which it was composed. That mode of writing is also inconsistent with the compliments you sometimes pay me, unless you meant them to be ironical also.

Some of those compliments are, I think, rather imprudent, and unfavourable to your purpose. "In philosophical subjects," you say, p. 29, "Dr. Priestley would be the last to reason from principles assumed without proof. But in divinity and ecclesiastical history he expects that his own assertion, or that of writers of his own persuasion, however uninformed or prejudiced, should pass with the whole christian world for proof of the boldest assumptions."

You should, indeed, Sir, be cautious how you lay these things before your readers; because it is very possible that they may draw a very different conclusion from them, and think that, if I have been so cautious and so successful in the investigation of truth in one province, I may, having the same talents, make the same successful application of them in other provinces. For the same *mental habits* generally accompany the same men in every scene of life, and in every mode of exertion. Your readers, therefore, may think it very improbable that a work written with so much care and attention, by such a person as you describe me to be, should deserve the character which you give of mine. "No work," you say, p. 66, "was ever sent abroad under the title of *history*, containing less of truth than his, in proportion to its volume." The passages which I have quoted, p. 4, 11, 14, and 89, are gross and coarse insults; but they affect yourself only, and not me. This is more extraordinary, as in other parts of your work you write with great candour and liberality. Your conclusion I particularly admire. My address to you on the subject of *necessity* was uniformly respectful.

It was particularly illiberal in you, and what I am

willing to hope you will never repeat, to use the term *conventicle*, p. 28, in speaking of the places of public worship in which I and Mr. Lindsey officiate. Would not that contemptuous appellation have applied equally well to the societies of the primitive christians, or to those of all the dissenters from the church of Rome before the Reformation? And what is it that has given your places of public worship a more honourable title, but the sanction of the *civil powers*, with which my religion never had any *alliance?* I glory in such independence and opprobrium.

By *conventicle* is usually meant an *unlawful assembly*. But since the late act of parliament in favour of Dissenters, our places of worship are as *legal* as yours. The only difference between them is, that ours are not supported by the wealth of the state as yours are; so that I am unjustly compelled to contribute to your maintenance, while you, instead of paying any thing towards mine, insult me for it. Our *meeting-houses* are equally known to the laws, and protected by them. If by conventicles you meant nothing more than a term of reproach, the good manners of the present age ought to have protected them from such an insult.

If your pride, as *a churchman*, p. 71, and the contemptuous airs you give yourself with respect to dissenters, be founded on the idea of your being a member of a great *establishment*; pray, Sir, what is your church establishment in this country? It is a thing of yesterday compared to the far more ancient and venerable church of Rome, whose members consider you as a *schismatic* and a *sectary* as much as myself. If, on the contrary, you boast of your *separation from the*

church of Rome, that *mother of harlots and abominations*, consider that the community of christians to which I belong is several removes further from her than yours, and is therefore less likely to be *one of those harlots* of which she is the *mother*.

On any consideration, therefore, I think that a style of greater modesty would have become you better. The time is approaching that will *try every man's work, what it is*; and if we learn the pure faith of the gospel, and our lives be conformable to it, it will not then be inquired whether we learned it in a *church* or a *conventicle*; in a church such as you have access to and from which I am excluded, or in such *conventicles* as the apostles were contented with.

As you strongly and repeatedly recommend the writings of Bishop Bull, with which, I own, I was but little acquainted, I have been induced to purchase them; and having *looked pretty carefully through them*, I find they have been the chief storehouse of weapons to yourself and others. Having found, therefore, *where your great strength lies*, I cannot help wishing that you would publish the whole of your great champion's works in English, and thus *put forth all your strength* at once. It would give me sincere pleasure to see you do this, and at the same time to avow yourself their defender.

As you rank yourself, p. 5, among "those whom the indulgence of providence has released from the more laborious offices of the priesthood *, to whom your more occupied brethren have a right to look up

* I find no trace of any *christian priesthood* in the New Testament, except what belongs to all christians, who are figuratively styled *kings and priests unto God*.

for support and succour in the common cause," this may be one of the "services" to which "you stand peculiarly engaged," as well as to answer my History of the Corruptions of Christianity. "It is (you say) for them" (speaking of those among whom you rank yourself) "to stand forth the champions of the common faith, and the advocates of their order. It is for them to wipe off the aspersions injuriously cast upon the sons of the establishment, as uninformed in the true grounds of the doctrine which they teach, or insincere in their belief of it. To this duty they are indispensably obliged by their providential exemption from work of a harder kind. It is the proper business of the station which is allotted them in Christ's household. And deep will be their shame, and insupportable their punishment, if in the great day of reckoning it should appear that they have received the wages of a service which hath never been performed."

I am glad, Sir, to find that you have so just a sense of the important duties of your elevated situation; and thinking the translation of Bishop Bull's works to be naturally comprised in your description of the duties incumbent upon you in it, I am ready to join with your *weaker brethren*, as you call them, (whose attainments you represent as very low,) in inviting you to undertake it; imagining, as I sincerely do, that the cause of truth will be promoted by it. And to some of those *weaker brethren* it may be more agreeable, as well as take up less time, to read Bishop Bull's works in English than in Latin. In my opinion, no writings are more easy to be refuted than those of this bishop. And though encumbered with what you call the laborious offices of the priesthood, as well as en-

gaged in a variety of other pursuits, I shall not think it any great addition to my labours if I undertake to reply to you, thus ably as you may think yourself supported.

You have, I perceive, some advantages which I have not, especially in having access to *scarce books*. I, for instance, had not so much as heard of the work of Daniel Zuicker, from which you suppose I have borrowed most of my arguments; whereas you appear to be well acquainted with it, and all the writings of that author, or you could not have said as you do, p. 9, "Nor is a single argument to be found in the writings either of Zuicker or Episcopius, which is not unanswerably confuted by our learned Dr. George Bull, afterwards Lord Bishop of St. David's, in three celebrated treatises, which deserve the particular attention of every one who would take upon him to be either a teacher or an historian of the christian faith."

You should not, however, have charged me with borrowing from a work which, though in your possession, you might have known was not very common. A learned friend, whom I desired to inquire for it, tells me that it is not to be found at any bookseller's in London, in the British Museum, or in the Bodleian or Sion libraries; and that at last he inquired of particular persons most likely to have it, but none of them could tell him where it was to be met with*. I shall endeavour, however, to make the most of such books

* I find in the General Biographical Dictionary, under the article *Comenius*, that Zuicker wrote *three defences* of his original work, entitled *Irenicon Irenicorum*, in answer to Comenius; and that Bishop Bull was accused by D. Crellius of not having read those pieces, for want of which he censured Zuicker for some things which he otherwise would not have objected to him.

as I have, and in time I may be able to procure more.

But what is of more importance than any thing else in these studies, is a sincere *love of truth*, and a cool and patient investigation of it, which I shall endeavour to cultivate. I hope also to keep my mind always open to conviction, and that I shall not neglect to avail myself of any light that may be furnished me, from friend or from foe.

Hoping to hear from you as soon as your leisure will permit, and assuring you of the pleasure it will give me to continue this correspondence, till each of us shall have advanced what may occur to us on the subject,

I am, dear Sir,

Your very humble servant,

J. PRIESTLEY.

BIRMINGHAM, *November*, 1783.

POSTSCRIPT.

IN this Postscript, besides adding a few notes and observations relating to the subject of the preceding Letters, I shall insert a few larger articles, that respect the controversy in general.

I.

The original extracts from Origen's works referred to p. 30, 31, are the following:

The old Latin Version.

Et cum videris eos qui ex Judæis crediderunt in Jesum, aliquando quidem ex Maria et Joseph eum esse putantes; aliquando

autem de sola Maria et spiritu sancto, videbis, &c. In Matt. Tract. 13. Opera Latine, vol. ii. p. 88.

The Greek of Huetius's Edition.

Και οταν ιδης των απο Ιουδαιων πιστευοντων εις τον Ιησουν την περι του σωτηρος πιστιν, ὁτε μεν εκ Μαριας και του Ιωσηφ οιομενων αυτον ειναι, ὁτε δε εκ Μαριας μεν μονης και του θειου πνευματος, ου μην και μετα της περι αυτου θεολογιας, οψει, &c. Comment. in Matt. ed. Huetii, vol. i. p. 427. E.

The passage referred to, p. 31.

Ζητω ει δυνασαι πολλους μεν ειπειν επιτιμωντας ἱνα σιωπησῃ τῳ Εβιωναιῳ και πτωχευοντι περι την εις Ιησουν πιστιν, τους απο των εθνων, οἱ τινες παρ' ολιγους ἁπαντες πεπιστευκασιν αυτον εκ παρθενου γεγενησθαι. Ibid. p. 428. C.

II.

Of Heresy in early Times.

P. 41. That Irenæus did not mean to pass a sentence of what we should now call *damnation* upon the Ebionites is, I think, evident from what he says concerning them in the twenty-first chapter of his third book, and which has the appearance of great harshness. "If they persist," he says, "in their error, not receiving the word of incorruption, they continue in mortal flesh, and are subject to death, not receiving the antidote of life*." The idea of this writer, and that of the fathers in general, was, that Christ recovered for man that immortality which Adam had lost; so that without his interference the whole race of mankind must have perished in the grave. This he represents as the punishment of the Ebionites. But he certainly could not mean that the Ebionites, *as such*,

* Non recipientes verbum incorruptionis perseverant in carne mortali, et sunt debitores mortis, antidotum vitæ non accipientes. Lib. 3. cap. xxi. p. 248.

should continue in the grave, while all the rest of mankind should rise from the dead. He must, therefore, have meant, not that they in particular, but that mankind in general, could have had no resurrection, if their doctrine had been true.

P. 42. Clemens Alexandrinus makes frequent mention of *heresies*. Almost the whole* of his seventh book of *Stromata* relates to that subject. He mentions fourteen different heresiarchs by name, and ten heresies by character; but none of them bear any relation to the Ebionites, or any species of unitarians, all of them respecting Gnostics only. He particularly speaks of the *pride* of heretics in general in pretending to deep science; whereas the Ebionites were always described in a very different manner, and were generally treated with contempt as well as abhorrence. On the other hand, Whitby says, that this writer speaks of the doctrine of the Logos being emitted from the Father at pleasure, and recalled into him again, (which Justin Martyr mentions, and which was hardly different from proper unitarianism, being the doctrine of Noetus, Praxeas, Sabellius, and Marcellus of Ancyra,) with approbation. He also says it is particularly remarkable that Justin Martyr, though he did not approve of this doctrine, passes it without any censure or mark of heresy†.

P. 42. I have not been able to find any particular

* *Dr. Priestley, in his Corrigenda, for the words* almost the whole, *directs the substitution of* a great part. *Dr. Horsley, in his Reply. Letter* x. *shows that it is but a very small proportion of the seventh book of Stromata which relates to heresies.*—Ed.

† Sententiam hancce, quam post Noetum et Praxeam, Sabellius propugnavit, Clementi Alexandrino ex pædagogia sua placuisse non sine ratione existimo.—Disquisitiones Modestæ, p. 173.

account of this *excommunication of the Ebionites by the fathers*, mentioned by Jerom; but I think it very possible that it might have been nothing more than what was done by Victor, bishop of Rome, when he excommunicated all the Eastern churches (of whom the Ebionites were the chief) because they observed the Jewish rules in fixing the time of Easter; so that in this excommunication no mention might be made of any other tenet or custom of theirs, besides this instance of their obstinate adherence to Judaism. The rule laid down by Victor was afterwards confirmed by the Council of Nice, but I believe without any sentence of excommunication on those who did not conform to it. If any person will give me any more light with respect to this subject, I shall be truly thankful for it.

III.

On the Conduct of the Apostles, p. 58.

To these observations I would add, that, as among the twelve apostles there must have been men of very different tempers and abilities, it is not probable that they should all have agreed in conducting themselves upon the plan of not divulging the doctrine of the divinity of their master till their hearers were sufficiently persuaded of his messiahship. Some of them would hardly have been capable of so much refinement, and they would certainly have differed about the *time* when it was proper to divulge so great a secret. Besides, the mother of Jesus, and many other persons of both sexes, must have been acquainted with it. For that this secret was strictly confined to the *twelve apostles* will hardly be maintained. And yet we have no account

either of their instructions to act in this manner, or of any difference of opinion or of conduct with respect to it.

It might have been expected also, that the information that a person whom they first conversed with as a *man*, was either God himself, or the maker of the world under God, should have been received with some degree of doubt and hesitation by some or other of them; especially as they had been so very hard to be persuaded of the truth of his resurrection, though they had been so fully apprized of it before hand. And yet, in all the history of the apostles, there is the same profound silence concerning this circumstance, and every other depending on the whole scheme, as if no such thing had ever had any existence but in the imaginations of Athanasius, Chrysostom, and those other fathers who maintained it; which I therefore believe to have been the case, and that they invented this hypothesis in order to account for the *early rise* and *general spread* of the unitarian doctrine, which they could not deny, and of which it may therefore be considered as very good evidence.

IV.

Of the Excommunication of Theodotus by Victor.

It may be objected to the evidence of Tertullian concerning the *major part* of christians being unitarians, that about the same time Victor, bishop of Rome, excommunicated Theodotus of Byzantium for denying the divinity of Christ; which it may be thought he would not have ventured to do if the popular prejudices had not been with him in this business. I do

not think, however, that there is any contrariety between these two facts, when the circumstances attending them are duly considered.

Tertullian lived in Africa, where there seems to have been a greater inclination for the unitarian doctrine than there was at Rome, as we may collect from the remarkable popularity of Sabellius in that country, and other circumstances. Athanasius also, who complains of many persons of low understanding favouring the same principles, was of the same country, residing chiefly in Egypt, though he had seen a great part of the christian world, and was no doubt well acquainted with it*.

We should likewise consider the peculiarly violent character of Victor, who was capable of doing what few other persons would have attempted; being the same person who excommunicated all the Eastern churches because they did not observe Easter at the same time that the Western churches did; for which he was much censured even by many bishops in the West.

Such an excommunication as this of Theodotus was

* I think it very probable that in the Western parts of the Roman empire in general, there were always fewer unitarians than in the Eastern parts; because the gospel was not preached so early in the Western parts, perhaps not to any great extent till the greater part of the clergy were infected with platonism. This might have been the case, especially in so remote a country as Gaul, where Irenæus resided, and may account for his treating the doctrine of the Ebionites with more severity than Justin, who lived in the East, where they were more numerous. On the same principles we may account for the prevalence of Arianism in all the barbarous nations bordering on the Roman empire. They had been converted to christianity chiefly by persecuted Arians. But Arianism was at length suppressed by the influence of the church of Rome, which also began to excommunicate the proper unitarians in the person of Theodotus.

by no means the same thing with cutting a person off from communion with any particular church with which he had been used to communicate. Theodotus was a stranger at Rome, and it is very possible that the body of the christian church at Rome did not interest themselves in the affair, the bishop and his clergy only approving of it. For I readily grant that, though there were some learned unitarians in all the early ages of christianity, the majority of the clergy were not so.

Theodotus, besides being a stranger at Rome, was a man of science, and is said by the unitarians to have been well received by Victor at first; so that it is very possible that the latter might have been instigated to what he did by some quarrel between them, of which we have no account.

Upon the whole, therefore, though Victor excommunicated this Theodotus, who was a stranger, and had perhaps made himself conspicuous, so as to have given some cause of umbrage or jealousy to him, it is very possible that a great proportion of the lower kind of people, who made no noise or disturbance, might continue in communion with that church, though they were known to be unitarians.

I am not disposed to take any advantage of Dr. Horsley's supposition, that Theodotus might hold the unitarian doctrine in some more offensive form than that of the ancient Ebionites, and therefore might be more liable to excommunication; because both Tertullian and Theodoret say that he believed the miraculous conception, and it is only Epiphanius (who lived long after the time of Tertullian) who asserts the contrary*. It is indeed pretty certain that the opinion of

* Tillemont's Memoirs, vol. vii. p. 116.

Jesus being the son of Joseph began soon to give way to the authority of the gospels of Matthew and Luke, and that it became extinct long before the doctrine of the simple humanity of Christ.

V.

Of Justin Martyr's Account of the Knowledge of some Christians of low Rank.

It is likewise said that the testimony of Tertullian is expressly contradicted by Justin Martyr *, who, in giving an account of the circumstances in which the platonic philosophy agreed, as he thought, with the doctrine of Moses, but with respect to which he supposed that Plato had borrowed from Moses, mentions the following particulars; viz. "the power which was after the first God, or the Logos," assuming the figure of a cross in the universe, borrowed from the fixing up of a serpent (which represented Christ) in the form of a cross in the wilderness; and a third principle, borrowed from the *spirit* which Moses said moved on the face of the water at the creation; and also the notion of some fire or conflagration, borrowed from some figurative expressions in Moses relating to the anger of God waxing hot. "These things," he says, "we do not borrow from others, but all others from us. With us you may hear and learn these things from those who do not know the form of the letters, who are rude and barbarous of speech, but wise and understanding in mind; and from some who are even lame and blind; so that you may be convinced that these things are not said by human wisdom, but by the power of God."

* Edit. Thirlby, p. 88.

But all that we can infer from this passage is, that these common people had learned from Moses that the world was made by the power and wisdom (or the Logos) of God; that the serpent in the wilderness represented Christ; and that there was a spirit of God that moved on the face of the waters; in short, that these plain people had been at the source from which Plato had borrowed his philosophy. It is by no means an explicit declaration that these common people thought that the Logos and the Spirit were persons distinct from God. Justin was not writing with a view to that question, as Tertullian was; but only meant to say how much more knowledge was to be found among the lowest of the christians than among the wisest of the heathen philosophers.

Besides, Justin is here *boasting* of the knowledge of these lower people, and it favoured his purpose to make it as considerable as he could; whereas Tertullian is *complaining* of the circumstance which he mentions: so that nothing but the conviction of a disagreeable truth could have extorted it from him. The same was the case with respect to Athanasius.

That the common people in Justin's time should understand his doctrine concerning the personification of the Logos, is in itself highly improbable. That this Logos, which was originally in God the same thing that *reason* is in man, should at the creation of the world assume a proper *personality*, and afterwards animate the body of Jesus Christ, either in addition to a human soul, or instead of it, is not only very absurd, but also so very *abstruse*, that it is in the highest degree improbable, *à priori*, that the common people should have adopted it. The scriptures, in which they

were chiefly conversant, could never teach them any such thing, and they could not have been capable of entering into the philosophical refinements of Justin on the subject. Whereas, that the common people should have believed as Tertullian and Athanasius represent them to have done, viz. that there is but one God; and that Christ was a man, the messenger or prophet of God, and no *second God* at all, the rival as it were of the first God, is a thing highly credible in itself, and therefore requires less external evidence.

VI.

Of the Passage in Justin Martyr concerning the Unitarians of his Time.*

I think myself possessed of so much evidence in favour of the unitarian doctrine having been maintained in the first ages of christianity, that I have no occasion to be solicitous about trifles with respect to it; and even with regard to the much-contested passage in

* Και γαρ εισι τινες απο του ἡμετερου γενους ὁμολογουντες αυτον Χριστον ειναι, ανθρωπον δε εξ ανθρωπων γενομενον αποφαινομενοι· οἰς ου συντιθεμαι, ουδ' αν πλειστοι ταυτα μοι δοξασαντες ειποιεν, επειδη ουκ ἀνθρωπειοις δίδαγμασι κεκελευσμεθα ὑπ' αυτου του Κριστου πειθεσθαι, αλλα τοις δια των μακαριων προφητων κηρυχθεισι, και δι' αυτου διδαχθεισι. Edit. Thirlby, p. 234.

Thus rendered by my opponent the Monthly Reviewer:

"There are some of our profession who acknowledge him to be the Christ, and yet maintain that he was a man born in the natural way; to whom I could not yield my assent, no not even if the majority of christians should think the same; because we are commanded by Christ himself not to rely on human doctrines, but to receive those which were published by the blessed prophets, and which he himself taught us."

By my Vindicator, more literally:

"There are some of our race [viz. Gentiles] who acknowledge him to be the Christ, and yet maintain that he was a man born

Justin Martyr, above referred to, and of which I made some use in my late History, vol. i. p. 17, it is quite sufficient for my purpose that the writer here speaks of unitarians with tenderness, and is far from treating them as *heretics*; and in this I think every reasonable man, who considers the manner in which this writer speaks of *heretics in general*, (on which occasion he specifies none but Gnostics,) will agree with me. If any person think otherwise, I have nothing further to say, and our readers must judge between us.

I cannot help thinking, however, with my learned Vindicator, that this passage, more critically examined, furnishes a still stronger evidence in favour of the prevalence of the unitarian doctrine in the time of Justin.

1. Let it be considered that, in this place, as well as in his writings in general, he *labours* the proof of the pre-existence of Christ, showing that it is consonant to the principles of platonism, and also deducible from the writings of Moses, and other parts of the Jewish scriptures, without referring to any other writer in support of what he advances.

2. He does not use a single acrimonious expression against those who differed from him with respect to it; which is just as any man would do who should write in defence of a novel or not very prevalent opinion, and one of which himself was the principal abettor. He even provides a retreat in case he should not be

in the natural way; to whom I do not assent, though the majority may have told me that they had been of the same opinion," &c.

Some conjecture that the original reading was ὑμετέρου, instead of ἡμετέρου; and then it should be rendered some of *your race*, meaning the Jewish christians. But there is no authority for this from any manuscript.

able to prove his point; saying that, though he should fail in this, it would not follow that he was mistaken in the other; for that still Jesus might be the Messiah, (which was evidently a matter of the first consequence with him,) though he should be nothing more than a man.

3. He talks of not being overborne by the authority of any number of men, even his fellow christians, but would adhere to the words of Christ and the sense of scripture; which is a style almost peculiar to those whose opinions are either quite novel, or at least not very prevalent.

4. The phrase "neither do I agree with the majority of christians, who may have objected to my opinion," which is nearly the most literal rendering of the passage, (though I would not be understood to lay much stress on that circumstance,) will naturally be construed to mean that the majority actually *did* make the objection, or that Justin suspected they *might* make it.

When I consider these circumstances, and also how apt all persons are to make their own party more numerous than it really is, I am inclined to think that, even if the passage might bear such a construction as that Justin meant to insinuate that the majority were with him, yet that it would not be the most natural construction, or a sufficient authority to conclude that such was the fact. I therefore think that, upon the whole, the passage has all the *appearance of an apology* (which is all that I have asserted) for an opinion different from that which in his time was commonly received on the subject.

I am, no doubt, influenced in my construction of

this particular passage, by the persuasion that I have, from other independent evidence, that the unitarians were in fact the majority of christians in the time of Justin; that he therefore knew this to be the case, and could not mean to insinuate the contrary. Another person, having a different persuasion concerning the state of opinions in that age, will naturally be inclined to put a different construction upon this passage. In this case, I only wish that he would suspend his judgement till he has attended to my other arguments, and afterwards he may perhaps see this passage in the same light in which I do.

The word γενος, I think with my learned friend, refers to *natural descent*; and I therefore conclude that Justin here meant not christians in general, but gentile christians in particular; because, as he is opposing the opinion concerning Christ, which made him to be *a man born of men*, not to the doctrine of the *miraculous conception*, but only to his *pre-existence*, the only idea that he had in his mind, and to which he attended, was that of his *simple humanity*; and we have positive evidence that this was the doctrine of *all* the Jewish christians, so that he could not speak of some of them holding it, and others not. Whereas the gentile christians were divided on that subject; and some of them even later than this, viz. in the time of Origen, held that, in the strictest sense of the expression, Jesus was a man born of man, being the son of Joseph as well as of Mary. I therefore think that Justin meant the gentile christians; omitting the Jewish christians, whose sentiments he might suppose to have been well known to the learned Jew with whom he was conversing.

Tillemont somewhere says that the majority of the

Ebionites seem to have believed that Christ was the son of Joseph; and as I find no mention of *two sorts* of Ebionites (one of them believing the miraculous conception, and the other not,) before the time of Origen, it is probable that in the time of Justin the Jewish christians were almost wholly Ebionites of the oldest denomination, believing Christ to be man born of man, in the strictest sense of the phrase; and therefore that, in this respect also, there could have been no pretence for any insinuation that the Jewish christians were divided on this point; and still less, that those among them who believed Jesus to be a man born of man, were not a very great majority of them.

It is plain from the existence of such christians, both among Jews and Gentiles, in the time of Origen, and probably much later, which was long after the publication of the gospels of Matthew and Luke, even in their present form, (admitting that there might be some doubt relating to the introductions to them when they were first published,) that they considered these evangelists simply as *historians*, and by no means as inspired writers; so that they thought themselves at liberty to admit or disregard their testimony to particular facts, according to their opinion of their evidence being competent or not competent in those particular cases. I have frequently avowed myself not to be a believer in the inspiration of the evangelists and apostles *as writers*, and have given my reasons pretty much at large for my opinion. I therefore, with these ancient unitarians, hold this subject of the miraculous conception to be one with respect to which any person is fully at liberty to think as the evidence shall ap-

pear to him, without any impeachment of his faith or character as a christian.

I shall conclude this article with observing that, without attending to minute criticisms, it is quite sufficient for my purpose that these ancient unitarian christians, whether they held the miraculous conception or not, whether they were Jews or Gentiles, or whether Justin meant to represent them as (strictly speaking) the majority of christians, or otherwise, were not treated by him *as heretics*. From this circumstance alone it may be concluded that they were very numerous; because, whenever unitarians have not been very numerous, and made a respectable figure among christians, they have always been considered with great abhorrence, and have been cut off from communion with those of the orthodox persuasion.

With what rancour does Eusebius treat this class of christians, both in his History, and in his Treatise against Marcellus of Ancyra! when we know, from Athanasius and other authorities, that they were at that time very numerous, (though among the lower classes of people,) and probably in all parts of the christian world.

When these things are duly considered, it can hardly be imagined but that, let this passage in Justin be construed in any manner that the words can possibly bear, it will be sufficiently to my purpose, and authorize all the use that I have made of it. But I can very well spare the passage altogether; thinking that I have evidence enough of my general position without it. After all the attention which I have given to this subject, I see no material objection to the manner in which I have expressed myself concerning it in my History. If, however, there should be a demand for a new edi-

tion of that work, I shall endeavour to make it as little exceptionable as possible, consistent with my own real opinion.

VII.

Of the first Author of the Doctrine of the permanent Personality of the Logos.

I have given a good deal of attention to this subject; and from a careful perusal of a considerable part of Justin Martyr's writings, I think it very probable that he was either the first, or one of the first, who advanced the doctrine of the permanent personality of the Logos. I think he writes as if this was the case; but I wish that some other person would give his works a more careful perusal with that particular view. He was probably the oldest of the authorities quoted by the anonymous writer referred to by Eusebius, as the Clemens mentioned along with him was probably not Clemens Romanus, but Clemens Alexandrinus, who was later than Justin Martyr. Had there been any pretence for quoting Hegesippus as a maintainer of the divinity of Christ, he would certainly have been mentioned in preference to Justin Martyr, or any others in the list; not only because he was an earlier writer, but chiefly because he was one of the Jewish christians, who are well known not to have favoured that opinion.

As to the *hymns* used by christians, and said to have been *from the beginning* (απαρχης) by those who were friends to the supposed doctrine of them, no inference can safely be drawn from them; because *divinity* may be ascribed to persons in very different senses, and some of them very innocent ones; and as to their *antiquity*, it is very possible, for any thing that appears

to the contrary, that they might have been those very hymns which were rejected by Paulus Samosatensis on account of their *novelty*.

VIII.

Maxims of historical Criticism.

Though the maxims of historical criticism are things that are well understood by all persons who attend to them, (and indeed, as they are the ultimate principles of all reasoning on these subjects, it would otherwise be in vain to appeal to them at all,) it may not be unuseful to enumerate them, and to illustrate such of them as may seem to require it. Things of a similar nature have been done by all mathematicians and critics. By the former these ultimate propositions are called *axioms*, and by the latter *canons of criticism*; and as I wish to reduce the species of criticism with which I and my opponents are now conversant to the greatest certainty, I have followed their example. I have, however, made no general system, but have only noted such particulars as I myself have had occasion for; and even this I am far from pretending to have executed with perfect accuracy: but I give it as a *sketch* to be examined at leisure, and to be rectified where it shall appear to be requisite.

These maxims are adapted to the following *Summary View* of those arguments which, I apprehend, establish my principal position, viz. that the christian church was originally unitarian; and therefore I have annexed to each of them the number of that article in the *Summary View* to which they correspond, that they may be compared together. I wish that Dr. Horsley and other

trinitarians would, in like manner, reduce into axioms the principles on which they proceed, that they may be compared with mine; and perhaps we may by this means be assisted in coming to a proper issue in this controversy. If my opponents will devise any other method that shall appear to be better adapted to gain the same desirable end, I shall heartily concur in it, and conform to it.

1.

When two persons give different accounts of things, that evidence is to be preferred which is either in itself more probable, or more agreeable to other credible testimony.

2.

Neither is entire credit to be given to any set of men with respect to what is reputable to them, nor to their enemies with respect to what is disreputable; but the account given by the one may be balanced by that of the other. Summary View, No. 10.

3.

Accounts of any set of men given by their enemies only, are always suspicious. But the confessions of enemies, and circumstances favourable to any body of men, collected from the writings of their adversaries, are deserving of particular regard.

4.

It is more natural for men who wish to speak disparagingly of any sect, to undervalue their numbers, as well as every thing else relating to them; and it is equally natural for those who wish to speak respectfully of any party, to represent the members of it as

more numerous than they are. Summary View, No. 13.

5.

When persons form themselves into societies, so as to be distinguishable from others, they never fail to get some *particular name*, either assumed by themselves or imposed by others. This is necessary in order to make them the subject of conversation, long periphrases in discourse being very inconvenient. Summary View, No. 8.

6.

When particular opinions are ascribed to a particular class of men, without any distinction of the time when those opinions were adopted by them, it may be presumed that they were supposed to hold those opinions from the time that they received their denomination. Summary View, No. 4.

7.

When a particular description is given of a class of persons within any period of time, any person who can be proved to have the proper character of one of that class, may be deemed to have belonged to it, and to have enjoyed all the privileges of it, whatever they were. Summary View, No. 9.

8.

When an historian, or writer of any kind, professedly enumerates the several *species* belonging to any *genus*, or general body of men, and omits any particular species or denomination, which, if it had belonged to the genus, he, from his situation and circumstances, was not likely to have overlooked, it may

be presumed that he did not consider that particular species as belonging to the genus. Summary View, No. 7.

9.

Great changes in opinion are not usually made of a sudden, and never by great bodies of men. That history, therefore, which represents such changes as having been made gradually, and by easy steps, is always the more probable on that account. Summary View, No. 16.

10.

The common or unlearned people in any country, who do not speculate much, retain longest any opinions with which their minds have been much impressed; and therefore we always look for the oldest opinions in any country, or any class of men, among the common people, and not among the learned. Summary View, No. 13, 14.

11.

If any new opinions be introduced into a society, they are most likely to have introduced them who held opinions similar to them before they joined that society. Summary View, No. 15.

12.

If any particular opinion has never failed to excite great indignation in all ages and nations, where a contrary opinion has been generally received, and that particular opinion can be proved to have existed in any age or country when it did not excite indignation, it may be concluded that it had many partisans in that age or country. For, the opinion being the same, it

could not of itself be more respectable; and, human nature being the same, it could not but have been regarded in the same light, so long as the same stress was laid on the opposite opinion. Summary View, No. 1. 11, 12.

13.

When a time is given, in which any very remarkable and interesting opinion was not believed by a certain class of people, and another time in which the belief of it was general, the introduction of such an opinion may always be known by the effects which it will produce upon the minds and in the conduct of men; by the alarm which it will give to some, and the defence of it by others. If, therefore, no alarm was given, and no defence of it was made within any particular period, it may be concluded that the introduction of it did not take place within that period. Summary View, No. 2, 3. 6.

14.

When any particular opinion or practice is necessarily or customarily accompanied by any other opinion or practice, if the latter be not found within any particular period, it may be presumed that the former did not exist within that period. Summary View, No. 5.

IX.

A Summary View of the Evidence for the Primitive Christians having held the Doctrine of the simple Humanity of Christ.

1. It is acknowledged by early writers of the orthodox persuasion, that two kinds of heresy existed in the

times of the apostles, viz. that of those who held that Christ was simply a man, and that of the Gnostics; of whom some believed that Christ was man only in appearance, and others that it was only *Jesus*, and not the *Christ*, (a pre-existent spirit who descended from heaven, and dwelt in him,) that suffered on the cross. Now the apostle John animadverts with the greatest severity upon the latter, but makes no mention of the former; and can it be thought probable that he would pass it without censure if he had thought it to be an error, considering how great and how dangerous an error it has always been thought by those who have considered it as being an error at all? Maxim 12.

2. The great objection that Jews have always made to christianity in its present state is, that it enjoins the worship of more gods than one; and it is a great article with the christian writers of the second and following centuries to answer this objection. But it does not appear in all the book of Acts, in which we hear much of the cavils of the Jews, both in Jerusalem and in many parts of the Roman empire, that they made any such objection to christianity *then*; nor do the apostles, either there or in their Epistles, advance any thing with a view to such an objection. It may be presumed, therefore, that no such offence to the Jews had then been given by the preaching of a doctrine so offensive to them as that of the divinity of Christ must have been. Maxim 12, 13.

3. As no Jew had originally any idea of their Messiah being more than a man, and as the apostles and the first christians had certainly the same idea at first concerning Jesus, it may be supposed that, if ever they had been informed that Jesus was not a man, but either

God himself, or the maker of the world under God, we should have been able to trace the *time* and the *circumstances* in which so great a discovery was made to them; and that we should have perceived the effect which it had upon their minds; at least by some change in their manner of speaking concerning him. But nothing of this kind is to be found in the Gospels, in the book of Acts, or in any of the Epistles. We perceive marks enow of other new views of things, especially of the call of the Gentiles to partake of the privileges of the gospel; and we hear much of the disputes and the eager contention which it occasioned. But how much more must all their prejudices have been shocked by the information that a person whom they first took to be *a mere man,* was not a man, but either God himself, or the maker of the world under God? Maxim 13.

4. All the Jewish christians, after the destruction of Jerusalem, which was immediately after the age of the apostles, are said to have been *Ebionites*; and these were only of two sorts, some of them holding the miraculous conception of our Saviour, and others believing that he was the son of Joseph as well as of Mary. None of them are said to have believed either that he was God, or the maker of the world under God. And is it at all credible that the body of the Jewish christians, if they had ever been instructed by the apostles in the doctrine of the divinity or pre-existence of Christ, would so soon, and so generally, if not universally, have abandoned that faith? Maxim 6.

He are them r the do of Sup

5. Had Christ been considered as God, or the maker of the world under God, in the early ages of the church, he would naturally have been the proper

object of prayer to christians; nay, more so than God the Father, with whom, on the scheme of the doctrine of the trinity, they must have known that they had less immediate intercourse. But prayers to Jesus Christ were not used in early times, but gained ground gradually with the opinion of Christ being God, and the object of worship. Maxim 14.

6. Athanasius represents the apostles as obliged to use great caution not to offend their first converts with the doctrine of Christ's divinity, and as forbearing to urge that topic till they were first well established in the belief of his being the Messiah. He adds, that the Jews, being in an error on this subject, drew the Gentiles into it. Chrysostom agrees with Athanasius in this representation of the silence of the apostles in their first preaching, both with respect to the divinity of Christ and his miraculous conception. They both represent them as leaving their disciples to learn the doctrine of Christ's divinity by way of *inference* from certain expressions; and they do not pretend to produce any instance in which they taught that doctrine clearly and explicitly. Maxim 13.

7. Hegesippus, the first christian historian, himself a Jew, and therefore probably an Ebionite, enumerating the heresies of his time, mentions several of the Gnostic kind, but not that of Christ being a mere man. He moreover says, that in travelling to Rome, where he arrived in the time of Anicetus, he found all the churches that he visited held the faith which had been taught by Christ and the apostles, which, in his opinion, was probably that of Christ being not God, but man only. Justin Martyr also, and Clemens Alexandrinus, who wrote after Hegesippus, treat largely of

heresies in general, without mentioning or alluding to the unitarians. Maxim 8.

8. All those who were deemed heretics in early times were cut off from the communion of those who called themselves the *orthodox* christians, and went by some particular name, generally that of their leader. But the unitarians among the gentiles were not expelled from the assemblies of christians, but worshipped along with those who were called orthodox, and had no particular name till the time of Victor, who excommunicated Theodotus; and a long time after that Epiphanius endeavoured to give them the name of Alogi. And though the Ebionites, probably about or before this time, had been excommunicated by the Gentile christians, it was, as Jerom says, *only* on account of their rigid adherence to the law of Moses. Maxim 5.

9. The *Apostles' creed* is that which was taught to all catechumens before baptism, and additions were made to it from time to time, in order to exclude those who were denominated *heretics*. Now, though there are several articles in that creed which allude to the Gnostics, and tacitly condemn them, there was not, in the time of Tertullian, any article in it that alluded to the unitarians; so that even then any unitarian, at least one believing the miraculous conception, might have subscribed it. It may, therefore, be concluded, that simple unitarianism was not deemed heretical at the end of the second century. Maxim 7.

10. It is acknowledged by Eusebius and others, that the ancient unitarians themselves constantly asserted that their doctrine was the prevailing opinion of the christian church till the time of Victor. Maxim 2.

11. Justin Martyr, who maintains the pre-existence

of Christ, is so far from calling the contrary opinion a *heresy*, that what he says on the subject is evidently an apology for his own: and when he speaks of *heretics in general*, which he does with great indignation, as no christians, and having no communication with christians, he mentions the Gnostics only. Maxim 12.

12. Irenæus, who was after Justin, and who wrote a large treatise on the subject of heresy, says very little concerning the Ebionites. Those Ebionites he speaks of as believing that Christ was the son of Joseph, and he makes no mention of those who believed the miraculous conception. Maxim 12.

13. Tertullian represents the majority of the common or unlearned christians, the *Idiotæ*, as unitarians; and it is among the common people that we always find the oldest opinions in any country, and in any sect, while the learned are most apt to innovate. It may therefore be presumed that, as the unitarian doctrine was held by the common people in the time of Tertullian, it had been more general still before that time, and probably universal in the apostolical age. Athanasius also mentions it as a subject of complaint to the orthodox of his age, that *the many*, and especially persons of *low understandings*, were inclined to the unitarian doctrine. Maxim 4. 10.

14. The first who held and discussed the doctrine of the divinity of Christ, acknowledged that their opinions were exceedingly unpopular among the unlearned christians; that these dreaded the doctrine of the trinity, thinking that it infringed upon the doctrine of the supremacy of God the Father; and the learned christians make frequent apologies to them and to others for their own opinion. Maxim 10.

15. The divinity of Christ was first advanced and urged by those who had been heathen philosophers, and especially those who were admirers of the doctrine of Plato, who held the opinion of a *second* God. Austin says, that he considered Christ as no other than a most excellent man, and had no suspicion of the word of God being incarnate in him, or how "the catholic faith differed from the error of Photinus," (the last of the proper unitarians whose name is come down to us,) till he read the books of Plato; and that he was afterwards confirmed in the Catholic doctrine by reading the scriptures. Constantine, in his oration to the fathers of the council of Nice, speaks with commendation of Plato, as having taught the doctrine of "a second God, derived from the supreme God, and subservient to his will." Maxim 11.

16. There is a pretty easy gradation in the progress of the doctrine of the divinity of Christ; as he was first thought to be a God in some qualified sense of the word, a distinguished emanation from the supreme mind; and then the Logos, or the wisdom of God personified; and this *logos* was first thought to be only occasionally detached from the Deity, and then drawn into his essence again, before it was imagined that it had a *permanent personality* distinct from that of the source from which it sprung. And it was not till 400 years after that time that this *logos*, or Christ, was thought to be properly equal to the Father. Whereas, on the other hand, it is now pretended that the apostles taught the doctrine of the divinity of Christ, yet it cannot be denied that in the very times of the apostles the Jewish church, and many of the Gentiles also, held the opinion of his being a mere man. Here the trans-

ition is quite sudden, without any gradation at all. This must naturally have given the greatest alarm, such as is now given to those who are called orthodox by the present Socinians; and yet nothing of this kind can be perceived. Besides, it is certainly most probable that the christians of those times, urged as they were with the meanness of their master, should incline to *add to*, rather than *take from*, his natural rank and dignity. Maxim 9.

APPENDIX.

Extract of a Letter from a Friend.

DEAR SIR, *November 5*, 1783.

I HAVE just been reading Dr. Horsley's *charge* against you, to which I doubt not you will make a proper reply. As he seems to triumph in your having, as he supposes, mistaken the sense of some Greek quotations; and as parallel passages are not always at hand, though common enough if we could wait for them till they occur, I take the liberty of sending you one that I have since met with in Demosthenes, and another from Thucydides.

In opposition to your interpretation of the beginning of John's gospel, he says, the natural force of *ούτος* is *this person.* Very true, if the noun to which it belongs represent a person; but if the noun be only the name of a thing, then the natural force of *ούτος* will be *this thing*, as appears from the following passage from Demosthenes, 1st Olynthiac, Νυνι δε καιρος ηκει· τις ούτος; ὁ των Ολυνθιων αυτοματος τη πολει. "Now comes another conjuncture; what conjuncture? That which voluntarily offers itself to the republic from the Olynthians." FRANCIS.

The Doctor is much displeased with your translating *ουκ αλλῳ τινι η nothing but.* To be sure, if it were clear from other arguments that the *λογος* and *σοφια* in question were *persons*, his translation would be the true one. But that those words cannot always be un-

derstood to mean *no other person*, will be manifest from the following passage of Thucydides, lib. iv. cap. cxxvi. p. 311.

Ουκ αλλῳ τινι κτησαμενοί την δυναστειαν, η τῳ μαχομενοι κρατειν. Qui nulla alia ratione principatum sunt adepti, quam quod (hostes) præliando superarent.

As to the other passage from Theophilus, of which the Doctor takes notice in his 63d page, when you come to look at it again, you will perceive that you did not exactly hit on the meaning of the last line; and I think the Doctor was a little warped by his system, when he translated God *the* word, *the* wisdom, Man. I think it pretty plain from the preceding words, του θεου και του λογου, και της σοφιας αυτου, that the words in question should be translated "that there might be God, *his* word, *his* wisdom, (and) man." But this I submit to your better judgement.

LETTERS

TO

DR. HORSLEY,

PART II.

CONTAINING

FURTHER EVIDENCE

THAT

THE PRIMITIVE CHRISTIAN CHURCH WAS UNITARIAN.

BY JOSEPH PRIESTLEY, LL.D. F.R.S.

—— Ubi sunt ingentia magni
Verba viri?—— OVID.

PREFACE.

I AM truly concerned that the discussion which I have entered into, of the historical evidence of the doctrine of the primitive ages concerning the person of Christ, has not taken the amicable turn that I proposed, and of which I gave a specimen in my former series of Letters to Dr. Horsley. Those were strictly argumentative, and likewise uniformly respectful. But as *his* Letters, in answer to me, are written in a style that is far from corresponding to mine, as the reader must perceive in every page, to reply to him in the same respectful manner in which I first wrote, would have been unnatural and absurd. In the present publication, therefore, I have taken the liberty to treat him with more freedom.

As he has declared that he will make no further reply to me, I imagine that this publication will close the present controversy; and I hope it will not have been without its use in promoting the cause of truth, though I am persuaded it would have answered this end still more effectually, if my proposal of a perfectly amicable discussion, and also that of bringing it to its proper termination, had been accepted.

I am now proceeding with my larger History of the State of Opinions concerning Christ in the primitive Times. But to execute this work as I wish to do it, and consistently with my other engagements and pursuits, will require a considerable time, hardly less than two or three years. Nor will my readers wonder at

this, when I inform them that I am determined to examine for myself every thing that has been written by any christian writer for the first five or six centuries after Christ, with the single view of collecting from them whatever I can find to throw light on this particular subject. After this examination, in which I have already made considerable progress, I shall carefully attend to whatever the most respectable *modern writers* have advanced on this subject; and I shall then compose the work with all the circumspection that I am capable of, introducing into it any thing that I shall think proper from my different publications in this controversy, (which I consider as only answering a temporary purpose,) and then abandon it to the censures of my critics; and I hope there will not be wanting abler men than Dr. Horsley to discover and correct whatever imperfections may, after all, be found in it.

I will not rashly commit myself with respect to the issue of an inquiry of this extent, and that is not yet completed; but I can assure my readers that I see the most abundant cause to be satisfied with every thing of consequence that I have advanced in this controversy; and that I am able to produce much additional evidence for every article of it, as well as a variety of other matter relating to the subject, which will throw light on the opinions and turn of thinking in early times.

Among other particulars, I shall examine, as thoroughly as I can, those platonic notions concerning God, and the general system of things, which prepared the way for the doctrine of the divinity of Christ, and of the trinity; showing how they were understood, and how far they were adopted, by the christian

writers. In the mean time, having long given a good deal of attention to the subject, I will venture to say, that from what Dr. Horsley has dropped concerning Platonism, as well as from the admiration he has expressed of it, he understands very little of the matter.

As I now consider this controversy as closed, it is probable that till my larger work be printed, the public will hear no more from me on this subject. But if any thing more plausible than has yet been urged should appear, I shall have an opportunity of noticing it in the Theological Repository, which I hope soon to open again; and if any person will give his name, and propose any difficulty whatever relating to the present discussion, so that I shall see reason to think that it proceeds from a love of truth, and a desire of information, I here promise that I will speak fully to it, and I shall be as explicit as I possibly can. But to be more so than I have hitherto been is impossible. Such as I have been the public shall always find me. I have no reserve or concealment with respect to myself, and I shall always endeavour to preserve as much candour as possible with regard to others. But if I have been addicted to the *artifices* and *deceits* that Dr. Horsley so vehemently accuses me of, and if I have actually practised them to the age of fifty, I shall hardly lay them aside now. Let the public, therefore, be upon their guard against me, and "watch me as narrowly" as he says, p. 39, is necessary. Great changes in *character* and *habit* seldom take place at my age.

In this larger work, on which I am now employed, I find myself in a great measure upon new ground. At least, I see reason to think that it has never been sufficiently examined by any person who has had the

same general views of things that I have. Dr. Lardner, who was as much conversant with the early christian writers as perhaps any man whatever, and whose sentiments on the subject of this controversy were the same with mine, yet had another object in reading them. When I applied to him for some assistance it was too near the close of his life; and the few hints with which he did furnish me related wholly to the doctrine of *atonement*, on which he had before published a small tract of mine.

Przipcovius wrote upon this subject; but what he has advanced is very short, and very imperfect. What Zuicker did I can only learn from Bishop Bull, who had not seen all his works; but I suspect that he was not master of all the evidence that may be procured from a careful reading of ancient writers, and a comparison of the several circumstances to be collected from them; and it certainly requires no small degree of patience, as well as judgement and sagacity, to trace the real state of the unitarian christians in early times from the writings of their enemies only. For all their own writings are either grossly interpolated, or have perished, except the *Clementines*, which is a work of great curiosity, and has not yet been sufficiently considered. But a candid reader will make allowance for this great disadvantage, which, as the historian of the unitarians, I must labour under. Who is there that will pretend to collect from the Roman historians only a complete account of the affairs of the Carthaginians, the maxims of their conduct, and the motives of their public transactions, especially in relation to those things with respect to which we know that they mutually accused each other?

The *Clementines* (of which the *Recognitions* is little more than another edition) was probably written about the time of Justin Martyr. It is properly a *theological romance*, and a fine composition of its kind. The author was perhaps too proud of his abilities as a writer; but his work is certainly superior to any thing that is now extant of that age, the writings of Justin Martyr by no means excepted. It abounds with curious circumstances relating to the customs and opinions of the times; and on that account it is strongly recommended by Cotelerius, the editor. He says, that "though it abounds with trifles and errors, which had their source in a half christian philosophy and heresy, especially that of the Ebionites, it may be read with advantage, both on account of the elegance of the style, and the various learning that it contains, and likewise for the better understanding the doctrine of the first heretics*."

It is remarkable, not only that the author of this work, writing in the names of Peter and Clement, makes them unitarians, but that, in a great variety of theological discussions upon nice subjects, (in which every thing relating to the doctrine of the Gnostics, as it then stood, is minutely treated,) there is no appearance of his having so much as heard of the doctrine of the *personification of the logos*, or of *the divinity or pre-existence of Christ*, in any other form than that of the Gnostics, except in some particular expressions

* Et vero quæ damus *Clementina*, licet nugis, licet erroribus scatent, a semichristiana philosophia, et hæresi, præcipue Ebionitica, profectis, non sine fructu tamen legentur, tum propter elegantiam sermonis, tum multiplicis doctrinæ causa, tum denique ad melius cognoscenda primarum Hæresion dogmata.—*Preface.*

which Cotelerius supposes to be the interpolations of some Arian. It is probable, therefore, that though some of the works of Justin Martyr might perhaps have been extant when this writer was employed about his, they were but little known, or his opinions might have been adopted by few persons only.

Now this writer, whose knowledge of the state of opinions in his time cannot be questioned, would hardly have represented Peter and Clement as unitarians if he had not thought them to be such. Nay, it may be inferred from the view that he has given of their principles, that, supposing the doctrine of the trinity to have existed in his time, yet that Peter, Clement, and consequently the great body of christians in the apostolic age, were *generally thought* to have been unitarians, as he must have imagined that this circumstance would contribute to the credibility of his narrative. A writer who personates another will be as careful as he can to ascribe to him no opinions but such as are commonly supposed to be his; for without this the imposition, if any such was intended, could not answer his purpose. But I much question whether any serious imposition was really intended by this writer. The further consideration of this subject, however, I reserve for my larger work.

To return from this digression, I shall observe, that, as to the learned christians of the last age, (excepting the Athanasians,) they were almost all Arians, such as Dr. Whitby, Dr. Clarke, Mr. Whiston, Mr. Jackson, Mr. Pierce, &c. In their time it was a great thing to prove that the doctrine of the perfect equality of the Son to the Father in all divine perfections, was not the doctrine of the early ages. Those writers could not

indeed help perceiving traces of the doctrine of the *simple humanity of Christ*; but taking it for granted that this was an opinion concerning him as much *too low* as that of the Athanasians was *too high*, and there being no distinguished advocates for the proper unitarian doctrine in their time, they did not give sufficient attention to the circumstances relating to it. These circumstances it will be my business to collect and to compare; and situated as I am, it may be depended upon that I shall do it with all the circumspection of which I am capable.

Notwithstanding the fullness of my own persuasion, I am far from being sanguine in my expectations with respect to others, even from the strongest evidence that I can produce of the primitive christians having been universally or very generally unitarians. Though there do not appear to be so many learned Arians at present as there were thirty or forty years ago, yet I am well aware that the impression made by their writings is such, as that those persons who have now the most reputation for theological literature (having, in fact, been their disciples) are very generally of their opinion, as I myself formerly was; and therefore that there is at present, as might well be expected, a general prepossession against me among the more learned christians with respect to this argument.

I am also not so ignorant of history or of human nature as not to be sensible that *time* is requisite to make any considerable change even in the opinions of the learned, though it certainly requires more time to produce an equal change in those of the unlearned; and with respect to most persons who are advanced in life, it is hardly to be expected from any force of ar-

gument. But in the last ten years a very great change has been made in the opinions of those who have given much attention to theological matters, and the number of unitarians is greatly increased. A learned Trinitarian is almost a phænomenon in this country, and learned Arians are much fewer than they have been*. And when the *historical arguments* in favour of proper unitarianism, which have hitherto been very much overlooked, shall be duly attended to, especially that which arises from the consideration of the great body of the common people among christians having thought that Christ was simply *a man inspired of God*, and their having had no knowledge of his *pre-existence*, the conclusion that such a general persuasion must have been derived from the apostles having taught no other doctrine will not easily be avoided. It will also weigh much with those who are apt to lay great stress on the usual construction of some *particular texts*, to consider, that, in those early times, the scriptures were constantly read by persons better qualified to understand the language of them than we at this time can pretend to be, without suggesting any such notions of the divinity or the pre-existence of Christ, as are now supposed to be clearly contained in them. When these, I say, and other similar arguments, shall have had time to operate, they will, I am confident, meet with less obstruction continually, and produce a still greater change in ten years to come.

* By a *learned Trinitarian* or *Arian* I do not mean a man who has merely classical literature any more than mathematical or philosophical knowledge; but one who, having a competent knowledge of the learned languages, has made *theology* and *ecclesiastical history* his principal study. And I much question whether this has been the case with Dr. Horsley.

As the doctrine of the pre-existence of Christ came in with philosophical and speculative people, and required many centuries, and those years of gross darkness, before it laid firm hold on the minds of the common people, it will certainly remain a long time with them; and a disposition to accommodate to these will likewise operate to quicken the zeal of many teachers of christianity in its defence. This will, no doubt, protract the æra of reformation, towards which the enlightened friends of christianity look forwards with confidence and joy, to a more distant period.

In the mean time, it is a great satisfaction to reflect that, whatever difficulties may lie in the way of truth, no proper effort to remove them can be without its effect. So regular are the laws of nature, respecting even the human mind, and the influences to which it is exposed, that no endeavours to instruct or reform the world can be wholly lost. Like seed thrown into the ground, they may *seem* to be lost; but in due time, if the soil be good, and other circumstances favourable, (and for these things we, who scatter our seed promiscuously, must take our chance,) the harvest will in its proper season be abundant. This consideration should encourage all the labourers in the great field of mankind to *plow in hope*, and to *sow in hope*; that, if not we, at least our posterity, may *become partakers of our hope*. 1 Cor. ix. 10.

I can already perceive that several persons of more ingenuous dispositions among my Arian friends are much struck with some of the circumstances which I have brought to light, and others have had their objections completely removed; so that I am not without hope that a much greater number will think as I now

do when my *larger work* shall be published, especially if a sufficient degree of attention be excited to the subject. In this view I am truly thankful for what has already been done by Dr. Horsley and the Monthly Reviewers, and on this account I sincerely wish that their credit and influence were more considerable and extensive than they are. This opposition, and the effect of it abroad, will contribute to make the controversy better known; and though the truth may be borne down for a time, it will be the more firmly established in consequence of it in the end. It is like sinking a piece of cork, which, with the greater force it is plunged under water, with the greater force and celerity it will recover its natural place. It is with great tranquillity and satisfaction that I look forward towards this period; and I should not be qualified to appear before the public at all, if, in the mean time, I could not look upon such an opposition as I have hitherto experienced with a mixture of indifference and contempt.

When this investigation shall be completely finished, it will, probably, be matter of surprise to many, that it was not sooner discovered that the unitarians *must have been*, and certainly *were*, the great body of common christians till after the council of Nice. It may even be said that there was very little merit indeed in proving a thing so extremely obvious, and that many other persons had proved it quite as well before. I shall, if I live to see it, rejoice in this change of opinion, let who will have contributed to it.

In the mean time, what is all the opposition that a man can meet with, from whatever persons, and in whatever form it be carried on, when weighed against

the full conviction of his own mind, arising from a fair and careful examination? And with respect to the judgement of the public, the effect of any mode of opposition is only temporary. What did the unqualified approbation of all the defenders of a pretended *common sense*, by the Monthly Reviewers of that day, do for the doctrine? Has it now any advocates? Those Reviewers quote, without the least suspicion of any thing amiss, even Dr. Oswald's refutation of the only satisfactory argument for the being of a God, viz. from the consideration of *cause and effect*. But what has it availed in the issue? And what signified the rancour with which they treated my defence of the true common sense against the spurious one? Though much admired in its day, it has not been in their power to rescue it from oblivion.

Though Dr. Horsley is determined to make no reply to me, (and indeed, unless he was better informed with respect to this subject, it is more adviseable for him to leave the field to abler writers,) he is accountable to the public for misleading them, as he has done with respect to *facts* in ancient history, and for his defamation of the illustrious dead; as well as for his want of common candour, and his misrepresentations as to the living. If he be an honest man, and of an ingenuous mind, he must, in some mode or other, either refute this charge, or acknowledge the justness of it. He says, with respect to me, p. 6, "A writer of whom it is once proved that he is ill informed upon his subject, has no right to demand a further hearing." To which of us two the observation best applies let others judge. When he has read these Letters (if he should think proper to read them at all) he will, I

presume, be a little better informed than he is at present; and then I shall have no objection to his having another hearing, but I shall not think myself bound to reply.

As to the Monthly Reviewer, Mr. Badcock, if he should ever really study the subject of this controversy, (which it is evident enough he has not done yet,) he will find that he is mistaken with respect to every part of it; and if ever he comes to reflect upon his conduct in this business in a moral light, he will feel more than I should wish him or any man to do, except for his own good.

I shall close this preface with reminding the reader, that he should carefully distinguish with respect to the *importance* of the different articles that are now the subject of discussion. To prevent any material mistake of this kind, I published a small pamphlet, entitled A General View of the Arguments for the Unity of God, and against the Divinity and Pre-existence of Christ, from Reason, from the Scriptures, and from History; that when any advantage should be gained, either by myself or my antagonists, it might be seen at once what the amount of it really was, and be estimated accordingly. To this small piece, and especially the *Maxims of historical Criticism* contained in it and in my former Letters to Dr. Horsley, I wish that particular attention may be given in the course of this controversy, whether carried on by myself or others.

Large works, particularly of the historical kind, were never yet known to be free from mistakes. The subject of my History of the Corruptions of Christianity was so complex, and my attention was of course

divided among such a variety of different articles, and the materials were collected at the distance of so many years, that I really wonder that it has escaped so well as it has done; not one mistake having been discovered in it that at all affects my general design. What are all the errors put together compared to that gross one which I have shown Mosheim and Dr. Horsley to have fallen into? and yet the credit of Mosheim's history will not be materially affected by it on the whole. It is a work that I shall not scruple to quote myself, as I may have occasion, making due allowance for the author's peculiar prejudices. The candid reader will make the same allowance for me. Time, however, will show what the oversights have been. These will of course be corrected, and what remains will stand the firmer on that account.

Though I cannot say to Dr. Horsley as he does to me, p. 9, "I should have more than a single remark to make on almost every sentence of every one of your ten letters," it would have been easy for me, from the materials that I have already collected, to have extended this publication to a much greater length. But I do not choose, in these temporary pieces, to forestal my larger work; though I think it may be of use to produce so much of what I have collected as may tend to excite a more general attention to the subject, and invite others to engage in the same inquiry; that when I do publish that work I may find more readers properly prepared to judge of it than there appear to be at present. For that there are at present those who are not thus prepared, there cannot be a clearer indication, than that the writings of Mr. Badcock and Dr. Horsley in this controversy have found admirers.

Indeed, if I had not had the object above mentioned, and also thought that their animadversions gave me a good opportunity of producing additional evidence for what I had advanced in my History of the Corruptions of Christianity, I should not have troubled myself with replying to their objections or abuse. If I had left all their darts sticking in my buckler they would not have retarded my progress.

At all events, I wish the most rigorous investigation of this subject to proceed, whatever may be the consequence with respect to my opinions or myself, as I can sincerely adopt the prayer of Ajax, quoted by me in my first controversy with Dr. Brown:

> Ποιησον δ' αιθρην, δος δ' οφθαλμοισιν ιδεσθαι,
> Εν δε φαει και ολεσσον. Hom. Il. lib. xvii. v. 646.

> Give me but day, let light the truth disclose;
> Though *me* its beams confound, and not *my foes*.

Since the whole of this treatise was sent to the press, I have seen a posthumous piece of Dr. Lardner's, just published, entitled Four Discourses on Phil. ii. 4—12. which I cannot omit this opportunity of most earnestly recommending to all my readers. It is written with that simplicity and modesty which distinguish all his writings; and I should think it cannot fail to make a great impression on those whose minds are at all open to conviction in favour of the doctrine of the simple humanity of Christ. This he generally calls the *Nazarean*, and sometimes the *Unitarian* doctrine, as opposed both to the Trinitarian and the Arian

schemes, which he particularly considers. "This," he says, p. 70, "seems to be the plainest and most simple scheme of all; and it is generally allowed to have been the belief of the Nazarean christians, or the Jewish believers."

For the convenience of the reader I have subjoined to this preface a short state of the different opinions held by Dr. Horsley and myself on the subject of this controversy; and also an account of the time in which the principal ecclesiastical writers, and other persons whose names most frequently occur in the course of it, flourished. This will also be useful to the readers of my History of the Corruptions of Christianity.

Having, in the course of this controversy, had occasion very carefully to revise that part of the History which relates to the person of Christ, I can assure the reader that I see no reason to make any more than the following *corrections* and *alterations*, which, considering the difficulty and extent of the undertaking, will, I think, be deemed to be very inconsiderable, and upon the whole by no means unfavourable to my principal object.

N. B. (*b*) signifies *from the bottom of the page.*

P. 7. l. 8. (*b*) after *Nazarenes*, read *and it may be inferred from Origen, Epiphanius, and Eusebius, that the*, &c.

P. 9. l. 7. read *on account of the errors it contained, and these errors could be no other than the unitarian doctrine.*

P. 19. l. 2. after *corrupted*, add *and as these unitarians are called idiotæ* (common and ignorant people) by Tertullian, *it is more natural to look for ancient opinions among them than among the learned, who are more apt to innovate. With such manifest unfairness does Eusebius, or a more ancient writer, whose sentiments he adopts, treat the unitarians*, &c.

Ib. l. 6. for *successor*, read *predecessor.*

P. 29. l. 9. &c. (*b*) dele all within the parenthesis.

P. 32. l. 3. (*b*) dele *is not quoted by Irenæus and*, &c.

P. 55. l. 7. (*b*) read *the greater part.*

P. 74. l. 6. dele *According to Epiphanius*, and to the end of the sentence.

P. 99. l. 6. (*b*) read *that there may be God, the word, wisdom, man.*

P. 216. l. 12. for *our Lord*, read *the Lord.*

IN VOL. II.

P. 11. l. 10. read, *In this age the table on which it was celebrated was called the mystical table, and Theophilus, to whom Jerom (if the epistle be genuine) writes, says, that the very utensils*, &c.

For this last correction I am obliged to the writer of the Critical Review; and I shall be thankful to any of my readers for the notice of any other oversight, from which a work of this extent could not be expected to be exempt.

N. B. A copy of these corrections will be given to the purchasers of the History.

A CATALOGUE

OF

The principal Ecclesiastical Writers, &c. after the Apostolic Age, with the Time when they flourished, chiefly from Cave's Historia Literaria.

IGNATIUS,	A. D. 101	Cyprian - -	248
Polycarp -	108	Noetus - -	250
Papias -	110	Novatian -	251
Basilides -	120	Gregory of Neocesarea - -	252
Valentinus -	125	Paul of Samosata	260
Marcion -	130	Sabellius -	260
Justin Martyr -	140	Manes - -	277
Irenæus -	167	Arnobius -	303
Theophilus -	168	Lactantius -	303
Hegesippus -	170	Arius - -	315
Montanus -	172	Eusebius Pamphilus the historian	315
Tatian -	172	Athanasius -	326
Athenagoras -	177	Marcellus of Ancyra	330
Artemon -	187	Photinus -	344
Theodotus of Byzantium - -	192	Cyril of Jerusalem	350
Clemens Alexandrinus - -	192	Hilary - -	354
Tertullian -	192	Eunomius -	360
Symmachus -	201	Apollinarius (sen.)	362
Caius - - -	210	Epiphanius -	368
Hippolytus -	220	Optatus - -	368
Origen - -	230	Basil - -	370
Beryllus -	230	Gregory (Nyssen)	370
Dionysius (of Alexandria) - -	247	Gregory (Nazianzen)	370
		Apollinarius (jun.)	370

Ambrose -	374	Cyril of Alexandria	412
Jerom - -	378	Theodoret -	425
Austin -	396	Nestorius -	428
Chrysostom -	398	Eutyches -	448
Sulpicius Severus	401	Claudianus Mamertus	462
Pelagius - -	405	Facundus -	540
Theodorus of Mopsuestia -	407	Gregory the Great	590

The same in Alphabetical Order.

Ambrose - -	374	Eusebius Pamphilus	315
Apollinarius sen.	362	Eutyches -	448
——— jun.	370	Facundus -	540
Arius - -	315	Gregory the Great	590
Arnobius -	303	——— of Neocesarea - -	252
Artemon -	187	——— Nazianzen	370
Athanasius -	326	——— Nyssen -	370
Athenagoras -	177	Hegesippus -	170
Austin - -	396	Hilary - -	354
Basil - -	370	Hippolytus -	220
Basilides -	120	Ignatius - -	101
Beryllus -	230	Jerom -	378
Caius - -	210	Irenæus -	167
Chrysostom -	398	Justin Martyr -	140
Claudianus Mamertus	462	Lactantius -	303
Clemens Alexandrinus - -	192	Manes - -	277
Cyprian -	248	Marcellus of Ancyra	330
Cyril of Alexandria	412	Marcion -	130
——— Jerusalem	350	Montanus -	172
Dionysius of Alexandria - -	247	Nestorius -	428
Epiphanius -	368	Noetus - -	250
Eunomius -	360	Novatian -	251
		Optatus -	368

Origen - - 230
Papias - 110
Paul of Samosata 260
Pelagius - 405
Photinus - 344
Polycarp - 108
Sabellius - 260
Sulpicius Severus 401
Symmachus - 201
Tatian - - 172
Tertullian - - 192
Theodoret - 425
Theodorus of Mopsuestia - 407
Theodotus of Byzantium - 192
Theophilus of Antioch - 168
Valentinus - - 125

The different Opinions of Dr. Horsley *and Dr.* Priestley *briefly stated.*

That my readers may more easily form a clear and comprehensive idea of the *nature* and *extent* of this controversy, I shall, in this place, briefly state the principal articles on which Dr. Horsley and myself hold different opinions.

1. Dr. Horsley insists upon it that the faith of the primitive christian church must have been trinitarian, because that doctrine appears in the writings of Barnabas and Ignatius. I say that, admitting these works to be genuine *in the main*, they bear evident marks of interpolation with respect to this very subject, and therefore the conclusion is not just.

2. Dr. Horsley says, that those who are called *Ebionites* did not exist in the age of the apostles, and also that, though they believed the simple humanity of Christ, they probably held some mysterious exaltation of his nature after his ascension, which made him the object of prayer to them. I say the Ebionites certainly existed in the time of the apostles, and that this notion of their holding such an exaltation of his nature, as to make him the object of prayer, is highly improbable.

3. Dr. Horsley says, that those who are called *Nazarenes* by the early christian writers believed the divinity of Christ, that they did not exist till after the time of Adrian, and had their name from the place where they settled in the North of Galilee, after they were then driven from Jerusalem. I maintain that these Nazarenes no more believed the divinity of Christ than the Ebionites, and that, together with

them, they were supposed by the christian fathers to have existed in the time of the apostles.

4. Dr. Horsley maintains that there was a church of orthodox Jewish christians at Jerusalem after the time of Adrian; for that the body of Jewish christians, who had before observed the law of Moses, abandoned their ceremonies after the destruction of the place, in order to obtain the privileges of the Ælian colony settled there by Adrian. Origen, who asserts that the Jewish christians had not abandoned the laws and customs of their ancestors, Dr. Horsley says, must have known the contrary, and therefore asserted a wilful falsehood. I say that Adrian expelled all the Jews, whether christians or not, from Jerusalem, that the christian church afterwards settled at Jerusalem consisted wholly of Gentile converts, and that the testimony of Origen, agreeing with this, is highly worthy of credit.

5. Dr. Horsley maintains, that though he finds no unitarians in the apostolic age, a censure was intended for them by the apostle John in the phrase *Christ came in the flesh.* I assert that the unitarians did exist in great numbers in the time of John, but that he did not censure them at all; and that the phrase *Christ came in the flesh*, relates to the Gnostics only.

6. Dr. Horsley asserts that the unitarians, from the time that they made their appearance, were considered as *heretics* by the orthodox christians, and not admitted to communion with them, and particularly that they were included by Justin Martyr among those heretics whom he charges with *blasphemy*. I assert that in Justin's time, and much later, the unitarians were not deemed heretics at all, that Justin did not

even allude to unitarians in either of his two accounts of *heretics in general*, and that the *blasphemy* he speaks of respected the Gnostics only.

7. Though Tertullian says the *idiotæ*, who were the greater part of christians, were unitarians, and shocked at the doctrine of the trinity, Dr. Horsley asserts that he only meant to include a small number of them in that class, and those so ignorant and stupid as to deserve to be called *idiots*. I maintain that by *idiotæ* he only meant *unlearned persons*, or *persons in private life*; and I also maintain that even in Origen's time, and long after, a great part of these christians were unitarians, and in communion with the catholic church; that the term *heresy* was long used as synonymous to *Gnosticism*, and that the original use of the term frequently occurs even after the unitarians were deemed to be heretics.

8. Dr. Horsley maintains that by the Jews who held the simple humanity of Christ, Athanasius meant the unbelieving Jews only, and that the Gentiles who were by them converted to that belief were unbelieving Gentiles. I say the Jews were christian Jews, and their converts christian Gentiles.

9. Dr. Horsley maintains that the Jews in our Saviour's time believed in the doctrine of the trinity, that they expected the second person in the trinity as their Messiah, and that they changed their opinion concerning him when the christians applied it to Christ. I say that the Jews were always unitarians, that they expected only a man for their Messiah, and that they never changed their opinion on that subject.

10. Dr. Horsley says that the apostles considered Christ as being *God*, from the time that they considered

him as the Messiah. I say that they considered him as *a mere man* when they received him as the Messiah, and that we find no evidence in their history or in their writings that they ever changed that opinion concerning him.

11. Dr. Horsley denies that the orthodox fathers before the council of Nice held that the Logos had been an attribute of the deity, and then assumed a proper personality; and says, that all that they meant by the *generation of the son* was the *display of his powers* in the production of material beings. I assert that, by this *generation*, they certainly meant a *change of state* in the Logos, viz. from a mere *attribute*, such as *reason* is in man, to a *proper person*, and that in their opinion this was made with a view to the creation of the world.

12. Dr. Horsley can find no difference between this doctrine of the personification of the Logos and the peculiar opinions of the Arians. I assert that they were two schemes directly opposed to each other, and so clearly defined as never to have been confounded or mistaken.

13. Dr. Horsley asserts, that it seems to have been the opinion of all the fathers, and is likewise agreeable to the scriptures, that the second person in the trinity had his origin from the first person contemplating his own perfections. I challenge him to produce any authority whatever, ancient or modern, for that opinion.

14. Dr. Horsley maintains that, though the three persons in the trinity have each of them all the perfections of deity, the Father is the fountain of the divinity, and has some unknown pre-eminence. I assert that this pre-eminence is inconsistent with the proper *equality*, and that if they be properly equal they must necessarily be three gods as well as three persons.

15. Dr. Horsley says, that prayer for succour in external prosecution seems with particular propriety to be addressed to the Son. I say that this is altogether a distinction of his own, and has no countenance in scripture precept or example, nor, indeed, in those of the primitive church.

16. Dr. Horsley maintains that the unitarians do not even pretend that the general tenor of scripture is in their favour, that they cannot produce any text that plainly contains their doctrine, but that they derive it wholly from particular passages to which they give a figurative interpretation. Whereas I maintain that the unitarians have always appealed to the general tenor of scripture, and the plain language of it; and on the contrary, that the trinitarians cannot find *their* doctrine either in the general tenor or in any clear texts of scripture, but that they deduce it from particular expressions and circumstances, which, when rightly explained, do by no means authorize their conclusions.

17. Dr. Horsley says, that the difference between the unitarians and the Mahometans is so small, and such advances were made towards the Mahometans by the unitarians of the last age, that there is good ground to think that the unitarians will soon acknowledge the divine mission of Mahomet. He also represents christianity, on the principles of unitarianism, as inferior to deism, and, when joined with materialism, as highly favourable to atheism. Such charges as these, I say, can proceed from nothing but ignorance and malevolence, and do not deserve a serious refutation.

These are all the articles of importance on which we hold different opinions, every thing else being of less moment, and subordinate to these.

LETTERS

TO THE

ARCHDEACON OF ST. ALBAN'S.

LETTER I.

The Introduction.

REV. SIR,

AT length you have condescended to gratify my wishes, and have favoured me with a series of letters in answer to mine. But as they are written with a degree of insolence which nothing in your situation or mine can justify, and indicate a temper that appears to me to be very far from being the most proper for the discussion of historical truth, I shall consider myself in this answer as writing not so much to you, as to the candid part of the public, to whom our correspondence is open; and I have no doubt but that I shall be able to satisfy all who are qualified to judge between us, that your ignorance of the subject which you have undertaken to discuss is equal to your insolence; and therefore that there is no great reason to regret that you have formed a resolution to appear no more in this controversy. "Whatever more," you say, p. 9, "you may find to say upon the subject, in me you will have no antagonist."

I made the proposal to discuss the question of the state of opinions concerning Christ in the early ages in a perfectly amicable, and, as I thought, the most ad-

vantageous manner, and my address to you was uniformly respectful. It has not been my fault that this proposal was not accepted. You say, p. 166, "I held it my duty to use pretty freely that high seasoning of controversy which may interest the reader's attention." What that *high seasoning* is, is sufficiently apparent through the whole of your performance, viz. a violation of all decency, and perpetual imputations of the grossest but of the most improbable kind. This, from respect to the public and to myself, I shall not return; but I shall certainly think myself authorized by it to treat you with a little less ceremony in the present publication, in which I shall take occasion, from your gross mistakes and misrepresentations, to throw some further light on the subject of this discussion.

The reader must have been particularly struck with the frequent boasting of your *victory*, as if the controversy had come to a regular termination, and the public had decided in your favour. "My victory," you say, p. 7, "is already so complete, that I might well decline any further contest." In p. 160 you say, "it would have heightened the pride of my victory if I could have found a fair occasion to be the herald of my adversary's praise." P. 10, you call me a *foiled polemic*, and p. 8, a *prostrate enemy*. What marks of *prostration* you may have perceived in me I cannot tell. I do not know that I have yet laid myself at your feet, and I presume this kind of language is rather premature. It will be time enough for you to say with Entellus, *Hic cæstus artemque repono*, when the victory, of which you boast, shall be as clear as his, and shall be declared to be so by the *proper judges*. You ought also to have remembered the advice of Solomon,

Prov. xxvii. 2. *Let another man praise thee, and not thine own mouth; a stranger, and not thine own lips.*

On the contrary, I cautioned my reader (Preface, p. xiv.) not to conclude too hastily in my favour, but to wait till you had made your reply. You have now done it; and I hope they will do me the justice to hear me again in return, especially as this will probably be the last time that I shall trouble them in this way.

Though this controversy has not come to what I think its proper and desirable termination, I rejoice that it has proceeded thus far; and upon the whole I derive great satisfaction from the opposition that my History of the Corruptions of Christianity has met with, both because a more general attention has been excited to the subject, and also because, having by this means been led to attend to it more than I should otherwise have done, I have discovered a variety of *additional evidence* in support of what I had advanced, and such an abundant confirmation of the evidence before produced, as gives even myself a greater degree of confidence in it than I could otherwise have had. And when my readers in general shall see, as they cannot but see, with what extreme eagerness the most insignificant oversights have been catched at and magnified, and the readiness with which I have acknowledged such oversights, notwithstanding the gross insults with which this candour has been treated, and also that every objection has brought out new evidence in my favour, it cannot but beget a persuasion that the most sharp-sighted adversary will not be able to detect any mistake of real consequence; and from this will be derived a degree of credit to my work that nothing else could have given it. Your object, you say, p. 8, was

to *demolish the credit of my narrative*; but I am much mistaken if, instead of that, your weak though violent opposition has not greatly contributed to strengthen it.

You will perhaps be struck with the change in the style of my address to you, when you observe me beginning with *Rev. Sir*, instead of the *Dear Sir* of my former letters, an appellation to which our personal acquaintance gave a propriety, and which you have returned; but when I consider how ill it corresponds to the spirit of your letters, and the stress you lay on your *Archidiaconal dignity*, which appears not only in the title-page of your work, but at the head of many of your letters, and which you intimate, p. 158, that I had not sufficiently attended to, I thought the style of *Rev. Sir*, and occasionally that of *Mr. Archdeacon*, both more proper, and also more pleasing to yourself; and therefore I have adopted it. And if by any accident I should *wound your feelings*, p. 159, you will find the proper balm in my *running title*.

While persons who have some personal acquaintance treat each other with decent respect, and are uniform in doing it, as I have been to you, the usual style of *Dear Sir* is natural and proper; but when you charge me with numerous instances of the grossest artifice, and imposition on the Public, you in fact *give me the lie;* and therefore ought yourself to have dropped all terms expressive of affection and regard. I renounce all particular respect for the man who has treated me in this manner; and in the outset of this second part of our correspondence I subscribe myself, merely because custom authorizes the form,

Rev. Sir, your very humble servant,

J. PRIESTLEY.

LETTER II.

Of the Doctrine of the first Ages concerning the Person of Christ.

REV. SIR,

To show you that I see nothing very formidable in your strongest arguments, I shall begin with what you call "your *positive proof*," p. 64, "that the divinity of our Lord was the belief of the very first christians." This proof is wholly derived from the Epistle of Barnabas.

Of Barnabas you say, p. 66, "You allow him a place among the fathers of the apostolic age, and will you not allow that he was a believer in our Lord's divinity? I will not take upon me, Sir, to answer this question for you; but I will take upon me to say, that whoever denies it must deny it to his own shame. The proof from this writer," you say, p. 68, "is so direct and full, though it lies in a narrow compass, that if this be laid in one scale, and your whole mass of evidence from incidental and ambiguous allusions in the other, the latter would fly up and kick the beam."

I am surprised, Sir, at the extreme confidence with which you tread this very precarious and uncertain ground; when, to say nothing of the doubts entertained by many learned men concerning the genuineness of this epistle, the most that is possible to be admitted is, that it is genuine *in the main*. For, whether you may have observed it or not, it is most evidently *interpolated*, and the interpolations respect the very subject of which we treat. Two passages in the Greek, which assert the pre-existence of Christ, are omitted

in the ancient Latin version of it. And can it be supposed that that version was made in an age in which such an omission was likely to be made? Both the interpolations are in sect. vi. where we now read thus: λεγει γαρ ἡ γραφη περι ἡμων, ὡς λεγει τῳ υἱῳ, Ποιησωμεν κατ᾽ εικονα και καθ᾽ ὁμοιωσιν ἡμων τον ανθρωπον. *For the scripture says concerning us, as he says to the Son, Let us make man according to our image and our likeness.* But the ancient Latin version corresponding to this passage is simply this, *Sicut dicit scriptura, Faciamus hominem,* &c. i. e. *As says the scripture, Let us make man,* &c.

Again, in the same section, after quoting from Moses, *Increase and multiply, and replenish the earth,* the Greek copy has ταυτα προς τον υἱον, *these things to the Son*; but in the old Latin version the clause is wholly omitted; and certainly there is no want of it, or of the similar clause in the former passage, with respect to the general object of the writer. These, Sir, appear to me pretty evident marks of interpolation.

The passage on which you lay the chief stress is only in the Latin version, that part of the Greek copy to which it corresponds being now lost; and all the other expressions that you note are such as an unitarian will find no difficulty in accommodating to his principles.

On these accounts your evidence from this epistle of Barnabas will by no means bear the stress that you lay upon it. Can it be thought at all improbable, that if one person interpolated the Greek, another should make as free with the Latin version? I must therefore see other evidence than this from Barnabas, before I can admit that the doctrine of the divinity or pre-existence of Christ was the belief of the apostolic age.

You still argue with the same confidence from the Epistle of Clemens Romanus. "The context," you now say, p. 29, "determines the coming of Christ, of which he speaks, to be from a pre-existent state," and this you call "something of great importance in its defence," as no doubt it would be if it was just: but let us examine it. The whole of the passage, with the small context on which you lay so much stress, is, in your own words, as follows: "He came not, says Clemens, in the pomp of pride and arrogance, although he had it in his power, but in humility, as the Holy Spirit spake concerning him. To determine what this humility is, Clemens immediately goes on to cite the prophecies which describe the Messiah's low condition. The humility, therefore, of an ordinary condition is that in which it is said the Messiah came. The pomp, therefore, of a high condition is the pomp in which it is said he came not, although he had it in his power to come. The expressions, therefore, clearly imply that our Lord, ere he came, had the power to choose in what condition he would be born."

But, Sir, had you considered the prophecies which Clemens quotes, you would have found them to be not such as describe the circumstances of his *birth*, but only those of his *public life* and *death*; the principal of them being Isaiah liii. which he quotes almost at full length. How then does this *important circumstance* help your argument? It is, on the other hand, certainly favourable to mine, viz. that when Christ was in public life he made no ostentatious display of the extraordinary powers with which he was invested, and preferred a low condition to that of a great prince.

The more ancient reading that you quote of Jerom

I also consider as evidently favourable to my interpretation of this passage. He read παντα δυναμενος, *having all power*, which naturally alludes to the great power of which he became possessed after the descent of the spirit of God upon him at his baptism.

As to the phrase *coming*, you must be little *at home*, as you say, in the language of the scriptures, or have given little attention to it, not to have perceived that it is a phrase used to express *the mission of any prophet*, and that it is applied to John the Baptist as well as to Christ, of which the following are examples: Matt. xi. 18, 19, *John came neither eating nor drinking*, &c. *The son of man came eating and drinking*, &c. *i. e.* not locally from heaven, but as the prophets came from God. Christ says of John, Matt. xxi. 32, *John came unto you in the way of righteousness.* John the evangelist also says of him, John i. 7, *The same came for a witness*, &c. so that all your descanting upon this passage of Clemens is impertinent.

Admitting that some one circumstance in the prophecies he quotes, rigorously interpreted, should allude to the birth of Christ, (though I see no reason to think so,) you are not authorized to conclude that Clemens attended to that in particular, but to the general scope of the whole, which is evidently descriptive of his public life only.

If, with your boasted knowledge of *Greek*, you had attended ever so little to the *theory of language* in general, and the natural *use of words*, you would have seen that the term *God* would not, from the beginning, have been used by way of contradistinction to *Christ*, if the former could have been predicated of the latter. We say *the prince and the king*, because the prince is

not a king. If he had, we should have had recourse to some other distinction, as that of *greater* and *less*, *senior* and *junior*, *father* and *son*, &c. When therefore the apostle Paul said that the church at Corinth was *Christ's*, and that *Christ* was *God's*, (and that manner of distinguishing them is perpetual in the New Testament,) it is evident that he could have no idea of Christ being *God* in any proper sense of the word.

In like manner, Clemens, in this passage, calling *Christ* the *sceptre of the majesty of God*, sufficiently proves that, in his idea, the *sceptre* was one thing, and the God whose sceptre it was, another. This, I say, must have been the case when this language was first adopted, though, when principles are once formed, we see by a variety of experience that any language may be accommodated to them. But an attention to this circumstance will, I doubt not, contribute, with persons of real discernment, to bring us back to the original use of the words, and to the ideas originally annexed to them. I am persuaded that even now the constant use of these terms *Christ* and *God*, as opposed to each other, has a great effect in preventing those of the common people who read the New Testament more than books of controversy, from being habitually and practically trinitarians. There will by this means be a much greater difference between *God* and *Christ* in their *minds* than they find in their *creeds*.

With respect to Ignatius I would observe, that as you knew the genuineness of his epistles had been controverted, and by men of learning and ability, you certainly ought not from the first to have concealed that circumstance. You say, however, p. 34, "I shall

appeal to them with the less scruple, forasmuch as the same sincerity which I ascribe to them, and which is quite sufficient for my purpose, is allowed by the learned and the candid Dr. Lardner.—After suggesting in no very confident language, that even the smaller epistles may have been tampered with by the Arians, or the Orthodox, or both, he adds, *I do not affirm that there are in them any considerable alterations or corruptions.* If no *considerable* corruptions or alterations, certainly none respecting a point of such importance as the original nature of Christ."

This is curious indeed. What then could Dr. Lardner mean by these epistles having been *tampered with by the Arians, the Orthodox, or both?* If *they* interpolated them at all, it would certainly be to introduce into them passages favourable to their opinions concerning the divinity or pre-existence of Christ. How would it be worth their while, *as Arians or Orthodox*, to interpolate them for any other purpose? If a farmer, hearing of some depredation on his property committed by foxes, should say, My *corn* may have been plundered, but as the mischief has been done by *foxes*, my *geese* and my *poultry* are safe; what would be said of his reasoning? Yet of the same nature is yours in this case.

These foxes have not refrained from their prey in more sacred inclosures than those of Ignatius.—Sir Isaac Newton, among others, has clearly proved that the orthodox, as they are commonly called, have in this way *tampered* with the New Testament itself; having made interpolations favourable to the doctrine of the trinity, especially the famous passage concerning the *three that bear record in heaven*, in the first

epistle of John. This I should imagine you yourself will acknowledge; and can you think they would spare the epistles of Ignatius, which were much more in their power?

Jortin says, "Though the shorter epistles are on many accounts preferable to the larger, yet I will not affirm that they have undergone no alteration at all." Remarks on Ecclesiastical History, vol. i. p. 361.

For my own part, I scruple not to say, that there never were more evident marks of interpolation in any writings than are to be found in these *genuine epistles*, as they are called, of Ignatius; though I am willing to allow, on reconsidering them, that, exclusive of manifest interpolation, there may be a ground-work of antiquity in them. The famous passage in Josephus concerning Christ is not a more evident interpolation than many in these epistles of Ignatius, which you quote with so much confidence.

You yourself may believe that every word now found in these epistles was actually written by Ignatius; but if they have been *tampered with*, or have undergone *alterations*, how can you quote them with so much confidence, as if the argument must necessarily have the same weight with all persons? Notwithstanding this you say, p. 34, "I will therefore still appeal to these epistles as sufficiently sincere to be decisive in the point in dispute. Nor shall I think myself obliged to go into the proof of their authenticity till you have given a satisfactory reply to every part of Bishop Pearson's elaborate defence, a work which I suspect you have not yet *looked through*." And I, Sir, shall save myself that trouble till you shall have replied to every part of Larroque's *answer to this work of Pearson*;

The different Opinions of Dr. Horsley *and Dr.* Priestley *briefly stated.*

That my readers may more easily form a clear and comprehensive idea of the *nature* and *extent* of this controversy, I shall, in this place, briefly state the principal articles on which Dr. Horsley and myself hold different opinions.

1. Dr. Horsley insists upon it that the faith of the primitive christian church must have been trinitarian, because that doctrine appears in the writings of Barnabas and Ignatius. I say that, admitting these works to be genuine *in the main*, they bear evident marks of interpolation with respect to this very subject, and therefore the conclusion is not just.

2. Dr. Horsley says, that those who are called *Ebionites* did not exist in the age of the apostles, and also that, though they believed the simple humanity of Christ, they probably held some mysterious exaltation of his nature after his ascension, which made him the object of prayer to them. I say the Ebionites certainly existed in the time of the apostles, and that this notion of their holding such an exaltation of his nature, as to make him the object of prayer, is highly improbable.

3. Dr. Horsley says, that those who are called *Nazarenes* by the early christian writers believed the divinity of Christ, that they did not exist till after the time of Adrian, and had their name from the place where they settled in the North of Galilee, after they were then driven from Jerusalem. I maintain that these Nazarenes no more believed the divinity of Christ than the Ebionites, and that, together with

them, they were supposed by the christian fathers to have existed in the time of the apostles.

4. Dr. Horsley maintains that there was a church of orthodox Jewish christians at Jerusalem after the time of Adrian; for that the body of Jewish christians, who had before observed the law of Moses, abandoned their ceremonies after the destruction of the place, in order to obtain the privileges of the Ælian colony settled there by Adrian. Origen, who asserts that the Jewish christians had not abandoned the laws and customs of their ancestors, Dr. Horsley says, must have known the contrary, and therefore asserted a wilful falsehood. I say that Adrian expelled all the Jews, whether christians or not, from Jerusalem, that the christian church afterwards settled at Jerusalem consisted wholly of Gentile converts, and that the testimony of Origen, agreeing with this, is highly worthy of credit.

5. Dr. Horsley maintains, that though he finds no unitarians in the apostolic age, a censure was intended for them by the apostle John in the phrase *Christ came in the flesh.* I assert that the unitarians did exist in great numbers in the time of John, but that he did not censure them at all; and that the phrase *Christ came in the flesh*, relates to the Gnostics only.

6. Dr. Horsley asserts that the unitarians, from the time that they made their appearance, were considered as *heretics* by the orthodox christians, and not admitted to communion with them, and particularly that they were included by Justin Martyr among those heretics whom he charges with *blasphemy*. I assert that in Justin's time, and much later, the unitarians were not deemed heretics at all, that Justin did not

The *was*, and the *was*, and the *was*, do not admit of his having ever not been*."

Perhaps you will say that this testimony of Epiphanius is *forged* by me, as you charge me with respect to the same writer, p. 13. I therefore beg that you would examine the passage yourself. You will find my reference to it sufficiently exact.

After reading this passage, can any person entertain a doubt but that, in the opinion of Epiphanius at least, (and weak as he was in some things, he stands uncontradicted *in this* by any authority whatever, and his account is confirmed by the most respectable ones in all antiquity,) the Nazarenes were not only a sect of Jewish christians in the time of the apostles, but, together with the Ebionites, a very formidable sect, and that this sect held the doctrine of the simple humanity of Christ? Did he not, as appears by this passage, consider the Nazarenes as standing in need of being taught the pre-existence and divinity of Christ, as well

* Διο και ὁ Ιωαννης ελθων ὁ μακαριος, και εὑρων τους ανθρωπους ησχολημενους περι την κατω Χριστου παρουσιαν, και των Εβιωναιων πλανηθεντων δια την ενσαρχον Χριστου γενεαλογιαν, απο Αβρααμ καταγομενην, και Λουκα αναγομενην αχρι του Αδαμ· εὑρων δε τους Κηρινθιανους και Μηρινθιανους εκ παρατριβης αυτον λεγοντας ειναι ψιλον ανθρωπον, και τους Ναζωραιους, και αλλας πολλας αἱρεσεις, ὡς κατοπιν ελθων, τεταρτος γαρ οὑτος ευαγγελιζεται, αρχεται ανακαλεισθαι, ὡς ειπειν, τους πλανηθεντας, και ησχολημενους περι την κατω Χριστου παρουσιαν, και λεγειν αυτοις (ὡς κατοπιν βαινων, και ὁρων τινας εις τραχειας ὁδους κεκλικοτας και αφεντας την ευθειαν και αληθινην, ὡς ειπειν) Ποι φερεσθε, ποι βαδιζετε, οἱ την τραχειαν ὁδον και σκανδαλωδη και εις χασμα φερουσαν βαδιζοντες; ανακαμψατε. Ουκ εστιν οὑτως, ουκ εστιν απο Μαριας μονον ὁ Θεος λογος, ὁ εκ πατρος ανωθεν γεγεννημενος, ουκ εστιν απο των χρονων Ιωσηφ του ταυτης ὁρμαστου, ουκ εστιν απο των χρονων Σαλαθιηλ, και Ζοροβαβηλ, και Δαβιδ, και Αβρααμ, και Ιακωβ, και Νωε, και Αδαμ, αλλα εν αρχη ην ὁ λογος, και ὁ λογος ην προς τον Θεον, και Θεος ην ὁ λογος. το δε ην, και ην, και ην, ουκ υποδεχεται του μη ειναι ποτε. Hær. 69. sect. xxiii. Epiphanii Opera, vol. i. edit. Paris. 1622, p. 746, 747.

as the Ebionites, and the other sects that he here mentions or alludes to?

In another place this writer compares the Nazarenes to persons who, seeing a fire at a distance, and not understanding the cause or the use of it, run towards it and burn themselves; so "these Jews, he says, on hearing the name of Jesus only, and the miracles performed by the apostles, believe on him; and knowing that he was born at Nazareth, and brought up in the house of Joseph, and that on that account he was called a *Nazarene*, (the apostles styling him *a man of Nazareth, approved by miracles and mighty deeds*,) imposed that name upon themselves *." How, Sir, does this agree with this writer's supposing that the Nazarenes, of whom he was treating, were well instructed in the doctrine of the divinity of Christ? Also, how does this agree with the late origin that you give to these Nazarenes?

You, Mr. Archdeacon, are pleased to deny the existence even of the Ebionites in the time of the apostles, contrary, I will venture to say, to the unanimous testimony of all antiquity.—Jerom, giving an account of the reasons that moved John to write his gospel, mentions the Ebionites not only as a sect, but a flourishing sect in the time of that apostle. See the following passage from his catalogue of ecclesiastical writers: "John, the apostle whom Jesus loved, the

* Ακουσαντες γαρ μονον ονομα Ιησου, και θεασαμενοι τα θεοσημεια τα δια χειρων των αποστολων γινομενα, και αυτοι εις Ιησουν πιστευουσι. γνοντες δε αυτον εκ Ναζαρετ εν γαστρι εγκυμονηθεντα, και εν οικῳ Ιωσηφ ανατραφεντα, και δια τουτο εν τῳ ευαγγελιῳ Ιησουν τον Ναζωραιον καλεισθαι, ὡς και οἱ αποστολοι φασιν Ιησουν τον Ναζωραιον ανδρα, αποδεδειγμενον εν τε σημειοις και τερασι και τα ἑξης· τουτο το ονομα επιτιθεασιν αυτοις, το καλεισθαι Ναζωραιους. Hær. 29. sect. v. Opera, vol. i. p. 121.

son of Zebedee, and brother of James, who was beheaded by Herod after the death of Christ, wrote his gospel the last of all (at the entreaty of the bishops of Asia) against Cerinthus and other heretics, and especially the doctrine of the Ebionites, then gaining ground, who said that Christ had no being before he was born of Mary, whence he was compelled to declare his divine origin*."—This is only one out of many authorities that I could produce for this purpose, and it is not possible to produce any to the contrary.

"As a certain proof," you say, p. 27, "that the Ebionites and Nazarenes were two distinct sects, Mosheim observes that each had its own gospel." But in answer to this opinion of Mosheim's, I shall give you another, which I think of equal authority, viz. that of Mr. Jeremiah Jones, with whom I find I have had the happiness to bring you acquainted; and I can introduce him with the greater confidence of his being well received, as he was as orthodox as yourself. As he is a writer entirely new to you, I shall give his whole paragraph on the subject.

"It is plain there was a very great agreement between these two ancient sects; and though they went under different names, yet they seem only to have differed in this, that the Ebionites had made some addition to the old Nazarene system. For Origen expressly tells us, Και Εβιωναιοι χρηματιζουσι οἱ απο Ιουδαιων τον Ιησουν ὡς Χριστον παραδεξαμενοι. *They*

* Joannes, Apostolus quem Jesus amavit plurimum, filius Zebedæi, frater Jacobi Apostoli, quem Herodes post passionem domini decollavit, novissimus omnium scripsit evangelium, rogatus ab Asiæ episcopis, adversus Cerinthum, aliosque hæreticos, et maxime tunc Ebionitarum dogma consurgens, qui asserunt Christum ante Mariam non fuisse, unde et compulsus est divinam ejus naturam edicere. Opera, vol. i. p. 273.

were called Ebionites who from among the Jews own Jesus to be the Christ. And though Epiphanius seems to make their gospels different, calling one πληρεστατον *most entire*, yet this need not move us. For if the learned Casaubon's conjecture should not be right, that we should read the same, viz. ου πληρεστατον in both places, (which yet is very probable for any thing Father Simon has proved to the contrary,) yet will the difficulty be all removed at once by this single consideration, that Epiphanius never saw any gospel of the Nazarenes; for though he calls it πληρεστατον, yet he himself says, ουκ οιδα δε ει και τας γενεαλογιας περιειλον, that he did not know whether they had taken away the genealogy, as the Ebionites had done; *i. e.* having never seen the Nazarene gospel, for aught he knew it might be the very same with that of the Ebionites, as indeed it most certainly was." On the Canon, vol. i. p. 386.

As I have perceived that the opinion of the moderns has sometimes great weight with you, I shall transcribe part of a note of the learned translator of Mosheim on this subject. "This gospel," he says, vol. i. p. 173, "which was called indiscriminately the gospel of the Nazarenes or Hebrews, is certainly the same with the gospel of the Ebionites, the gospel of the twelve apostles," &c. and, after referring to other authors, he says, "the reader will, however, find a still more accurate and satisfactory account of this gospel in the first volume of the learned and judicious Mr. Jones's incomparable method of settling the canonical authority of the New Testament."

But in my opinion Jerom has sufficiently decided this question against you. Could he have had my

other idea than that these two sects (if they were properly two) used the same gospel, when he said, "in the gospel used by the Nazarenes and Ebionites, which is commonly called the authentic gospel of Matthew, which I lately translated from Hebrew into Greek*," &c.

You further say, p. 71, "the Ebionites acknowledged no part of the Old Testament but the Pentateuch, nor the whole of that; and therefore that Hegesippus' citing the Proverbs of Solomon by a title which implies his acknowledgement of that book, is a proof that he was not an Ebionite." I know of no sufficient evidence that the Ebionites did not acknowledge the authority of all that we call the canonical books of the Old Testament. Symmachus, whose translation of the scriptures into Greek is so often quoted, and with the greatest approbation, by the fathers, was an Ebionite, and Jerom says the same of Theodotion. They both translated the other books of the Old Testament as well as the Pentateuch, and, as far as appears, without making any distinction between that and the other books; and can this be thought probable, if they had not considered them as entitled to equal credit? Besides, our Saviour's acknowledgement of the authority of the whole of the Old Testament is so express, that I cannot readily believe that any christians, Jews especially, acknowledging his authority, would reject what he admitted.

What you say can be only on the authority of Epiphanius, and that you ought to have known is in effect

* In Evangelio quo utuntur Nazareni et Ebionitæ, quod nuper in Græcum de Hebræo sermone transtulimus, et quod vocatur plerisque Matthæi authenticum, &c. In Matt. xii. 13. Opera, vol. vi. p. 21.

contradicted by Irenæus, who says that "the Ebionites expounded the prophecies too curiously." Quæ autem sunt prophetica curiosius exponere nituntur, lib. i. cap. 26.—Grabe says that Ebion wrote an exposition of the prophets, as he collected from some fragments of the work, of which he gives some account in his note on the place. By *Ebion* we may understand some *Ebionite;* for I much doubt the existence of such a person as Ebion, the Ebionites being mentioned long before the name Ebion occurs in ecclesiastical writers.

It is an argument in favour of the identity of the Nazarenes and Ebionites, that the former are not mentioned *by name* by any writer who likewise speaks of the Ebionites before Epiphanius, though the people so called afterwards were certainly known before his time. The term *Ebionites* occurs in Irenæus, Tertullian, Origen, and Eusebius; but none of them make any mention of *Nazarenes*; and yet it cannot be denied that they must have been even more considerable in the time of these writers than they were afterwards; for, together with the Ebionites, (if there was any difference between them,) they dwindled away till, in the time of Austin, they were *admodum pauci*, very few.

Origen must have meant to include those who were called Nazarenes under the appellation of Ebionites, because he speaks of the Ebionites as being the whole body of Jewish christians; and the Nazarenes were christian Jews as well as they. Jerom seems to use the two terms promiscuously; and in the passage of his letter to Austin, so often quoted in this controversy, I cannot help thinking he makes them to be the same.

The conduct of these writers is easily accounted for,

on the supposition of the Jewish christians having been first known to the Gentiles by the name of Ebionites only, before the appellation of Nazarenes (by which they had been distinguished by their unbelieving brethren) came to be generally known abroad. It must be more particularly difficult, on your principles, to account for the conduct of Eusebius, whose business, as a historian, it certainly was, to have noticed the Nazarenes if they had been different from the Ebionites whom he has mentioned; and even you allow them to have had their rise in the time of Adrian, whose expedition against the Jews he particularly mentions.

On this subject of the Ebionites I must take some notice of what you say in defence of Eusebius, who says that Theodotus was the first who taught the doctrine of the humanity of Christ. You still maintain, without the least shadow of authority for it, that he carried the doctrine further than the Ebionites had ever done; whereas, you cannot possibly produce any evidence whatever of Theodotus having been considered by the ancients in a worse light than the Ebionites.

"It is very certain," you say, p. 131, "that Theodotus maintained the mere humanity of Christ in the grossest sense; in that gross and shocking sense in which it is at this day taught by yourself and Mr. Lindsey. It is not certain that the Ebionites before Theodotus had gone further than to deny our Lord's original divinity. They probably, like Socinus, admitted some unintelligible exaltation of his nature after his resurrection, which rendered him the object of worship." You also say, p. 87, "I deny that the unita-

rian doctrine existed in that time" (the age of the apostles) " in the most obnoxious form. Produce your indisputable evidence. Observe, that by the most obnoxious form I understand that form which excludes the worship of Christ."

By *the most obnoxious form* I meant the belief that Jesus was the son of Joseph as well as of Mary. That such persons existed in the age of the apostles, no person, I believe, except yourself, ever denied; and there is no reason whatever to believe that these Ebionites, or any Ebionites, ever considered Christ as a proper object of worship. Your idea of their entertaining the notion of an *unintelligible exaltation of his mere human nature after his resurrection*, is the most improbable of all suppositions. According to all the accounts we have of the Ebionites, they were not apt to admit things *unintelligible*.

The case of Socinus is very different from that of the Ebionites. He had been educated in the habit of praying to Christ, and therefore might not be able to reject the practice; but the Ebionites began with considering Jesus as a *mere man*, and therefore would no more think of paying worship to him than they had done to Moses, without very express instructions and directions, which it is not in your power to produce with respect either to them, or to christians in general.

Your notion that the Nazarenes were the orthodox Jews who separated from the church of Jerusalem in the time of Adrian, and settled in the North of Galilee, and that they had their name from the place where they then settled, viz. Nazareth, will, I doubt not, be quite new to every reader of ecclesiastical history, and (excepting the first of these particulars, which

I suppose you learned of Mosheim, who neither quotes, nor, I will venture to say, could quote any authority for it,) an invention of your own. The Nazarenes in the time of the apostles are well known to have had their name from Nazareth, where Jesus had lived, and from which he had been usually called *Jesus of Nazareth*; but as to the Nazarenes of the christian fathers, there is no evidence whatever of their having ever settled at Nazareth, or in any part of Galilee. Jerom places the Nazarenes with whom he was acquainted, (and he was well acquainted with the Nazarenes,) in Beræa, in Syria. Catalogus Virorum Illustrium, in Matt. Opera, vol. i. p. 267.

You say that the Nazarenes were unknown as a sect before the destruction of Jerusalem by Adrian; but Epiphanius, in perfect agreement with all the ancients, places their rise after the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus. After mentioning the places where they resided, viz. Beræa, Cœle-Syria, Pella, and Cocabe, (observe, he says nothing of any of them being in *Nazareth*, from which you suppose they had their name,) he says, "There was their origin after the destruction of Jerusalem, when all the disciples lived at Pella; Christ having warned them to leave Jerusalem, and retire at the approach of the siege; and on this account they lived, as I said, in Peræa. Thence the sect of the Nazarenes had its origin*."

As to the passage in Jerom, from which I, after

* Εκειθεν γαρ ἡ αρχη γεγονε μετα την απο των Ἱεροσολυμων μετατασιν, παντων των μαθητων των εν Πελλῃ ῳκηκοτων, Χριστου φησαντος καταλειψαι τα Ἱεροσολυμα, και αναχωρησαι επειδη ημελλε πασχειν πολιορκιαν. και εκ της τοιαυτης ὑποθεσεως την Περαιαν οικησαντες, εκεισε, ὡς εφην, διετριβον. εντευθεν ἡ κατα τους Ναζωραιους αἱρεσις εσχε την αρχην. Hær. 29. sect. vii. Opera, vol. i. p. 123.

Suicer, inferred that the Ebionites and the Nazarenes were the same people, or only differed in some things of little moment, (but which you and Mr. Badcock think is a *demonstration* that they were fundamentally different,) I see no reason to be dissatisfied with my interpretation of it. You think it is a proof of my ignorance of Latin; whereas, if I thought myself at liberty to do it, I could produce in my favour as high a classical authority as any that this country can furnish.

How could Jerom call these highly orthodox Jews, as you suppose them to be, *not christians*, merely because they used the ceremonies of the law of Moses? He might have pitied them for their weakness, but he would hardly have condemned them as *no christians*.

Your own representation of them is not very unfavourable. You say, p. 49, "The christian Nazarenes had nothing in their conduct that might render them deserving of this epithet (*ανομοι, lawless*). Their error was, that they feared to use their liberty, not that they abused it." You therefore must think his censure very harsh and ill-applied.

I think it probable that the Nazarenes or Ebionites were considered as in a state of excommunication, not merely because they themselves observed the law of Moses, but because many of them would impose the same on the Gentiles, so that in fact they excommunicated themselves; and thus the passage in Jerom will be explained by one in Justin, (who says that he could communicate with those Jews who kept to the law of Moses, but not with those who would impose it on all christians,) which I shall have occasion to quote hereafter.

As to Mr. Badcock's inference from the passage in Austin's letter in answer to Jerom, I see no force in it at all. He only enumerates all the names that Jerom had mentioned; and whether these differences were real or nominal, great or little, it signified nothing to him. He himself, in his catalogue of heresies, makes a difference between the Ebionites and Nazarenes, but by no means that which you and Mr. Badcock make; and as it was a common opinion, especially in the West, that there was some difference between them, (though the writers who speak of it could never be certain in what it consisted,) it was very natural in Austin to mention them separately, whether Jerom had made them the same or not.

That Austin, in his answer to Jerom, did not consider the Nazarenes in any very favourable light, is evident from his speaking of them as *heretics*. "Quid putaverint hæretici, qui dum volunt et Judæi esse et christiani, nec Judæi esse nec christiani esse potuerunt," &c. Opera, vol. ii. p. 75. *i. e.* "As to the opinion of those heretics, who, while they would be both Jews and Christians, can neither be Jews nor Christians," &c. It is in these very words that Jerom had characterized those whom he had called *Nazarenes*. What more could Austin have said of the Ebionites? And can it be supposed that he would have spoken of the Nazarenes in this manner, if he had thought them *highly orthodox* with respect to the doctrine of the trinity? especially considering that it was an age in which the greatest account was made of that doctrine; so that soundness in that article might be supposed to have atoned for defects in other things.

You say you are not singular, as I had supposed, in

asserting the strict orthodoxy of the Nazarenes in opposition to the Ebionites; but you are more nearly so than you imagine.——" Hugo Grotius," you say, p. 38, " Vossius, Spencer, and Huetius agree that the Nazarenes and Ebionites, though sometimes confounded, were distinct sects, and they maintain the opinion which I now maintain of the high orthodoxy of the proper Nazarenes in the article of our Lord's divinity."

Having examined the most respectable of these authorities, viz. Grotius, I find him entirely failing you, and saying no such thing as you ascribe to him. What he says is as follows: " Certe Nazaræi illi Beræenses genuina erant propago eorum qui primi ex Palestina Christi fidem erant amplexi. Nam id illis nomen primitus fuisse inditum ex domini nostri nomine, qui vulgo Nazarenus vocabatur, apparet ex Act. xxiv. 5. Opera, vol. ii. p. 4. *i. e.* Those Beræan Nazarenes were the genuine descendants of those who first in Palestine embraced the christian faith; for that this name was originally given them from the name of our Saviour, who was commonly called *the Nazarene*, appears from Acts xxiv. 5.*"

This, Sir, is nothing more than I have repeatedly said myself, viz. that the Nazarenes mentioned by the primitive fathers were the genuine descendants of the

* *Dr. Horsley, in Reply, part i. p. 8, is extremely offended at this remark of Dr. Priestley, which indeed was incorrect, and is retracted by Dr. Priestley himself in his last Appendix to these Letters. It appears in fact that Grotius made a wide distinction between the Nazarenes and the Ebionites; the former, as he conceived, believing the miraculous conception and the deity of Christ; the latter denying his miraculous birth, and regarding him as a mere man. How far Grotius was right in this distinction is another question.*—Ed.

Nazarenes in the time of Paul. Grotius says nothing definite about their opinions; but if his meaning must be interpreted by his own opinion on the subject, it would, I presume, be in my favour; for it is allowed, I believe, on all hands, that his Commentary on the New Testament is very much Socinian, certainly not Athanasian. But admitting that you may have more modern authorities for the orthodoxy of the Nazarenes than I had imagined, (though I believe that a great majority are with me on this subject,) the only authorities that are of any weight are the ancients, and we are now upon ground that appears to me not to have been sufficiently examined by any of the moderns.

Rather than tax me with ignorance of the sentiments of modern critics on this subject, (which you are sometimes ready enough to do,) you suppose that I was acquainted with them, and had recourse to *artifice*. "Your attempt," you say, p. 38, "to set it forth in that light I cannot but consider as a stratagem, which you were willing to employ for the preservation of your battered citadel, the argument from the Nazarenes. In this stratagem, if I mistake not, you are completely foiled. In your sallies against the batteries which I have raised, I trust you will be little more successful. But as too much of stratagem is apt to mix itself with all your operations, it will be necessary that I watch very narrowly the manner of your approaches."

This argument, however, is not so much *battered* but that it will well hold out against all your efforts to overturn it. The Nazarenes, as well as the Ebionites, the genuine descendants of the old Jewish christians, and who cannot be proved to have departed from the faith of their ancestors, were all believers in the simple

humanity of Christ; and certainly the presumption is, that they learned this doctrine from the apostles. For who else were their teachers?

At the close of this subject, having, as you think, a manifest advantage over me, in answer to my saying that, if the Jewish christians were universally Ebionites in the time of Origen, the probability is that they were very generally so in the time of the apostles; you say, p. 62, "Whence should this probability arise? From this general maxim it seems that whole bodies of men do not soon change their opinions. You are indeed, Sir, the very last person who might have been expected to form conclusions upon an historical question from mere theory, in defiance of the experience of mankind, in defiance of the experience of our own country, and our own times. How long is it since the whole body of Dissenters in this kingdom (the single sect of the Quakers excepted) took their standard of orthodoxy from the opinions of Calvin? Where shall we now find a Dissenter, except perhaps among the dregs of Methodism, who would not think it an affront to be taken for a Calvinist?".

Indeed, Sir, you are peculiarly unfortunate with respect to this example, and ought to have been better informed before you had delivered your opinion of a matter of fact, in the present state of things, and at home, with so much confidence. The fact you appeal to is notoriously the very reverse of what you represent it to be, and is one among many strong proofs of the truth of my general maxim.

It is so far from being true, that there are few Dissenters who would not think it an affront to be taken for Calvinists, that the great body of them would be

exceedingly offended if they were called by any other name. This is notorious. Your learned good and able ally Mr. Badcock, of whom you boast so much, p. 77, 78, has served two congregations of Dissenters, both professedly Calvinistical, and in the highest degree. He himself ranks with that class; having now, as I am informed, no communion or connexion with those who are usually called *rational Dissenters*. I appeal to himself and his present congregation at South Molton, as well as his former at Barnstable, for the truth of the fact.

We Dissenters are much better situated than you are for judging of the truth of my general maxim, viz. that large bodies of men do not soon change their opinions. Notwithstanding the Dissenters have no legal bonds, but are perfectly free to adopt whatever opinions they please, yet, as they were universally Calvinists at the time of the Reformation, they are very generally so still. The ministers, as might be expected, are the most enlightened, and have introduced some reformation among the common people; but a majority of the ministers are, I believe, still Calvinists.

I should have thought that no person at all acquainted with history could have entertained a doubt with respect to the general maxim that you refer to, viz. that great bodies of men do not soon change their opinions. Did it not appear when our Saviour and the apostles preached the gospel with all the advantage of miracles; and did it not appear in the christianizing of the Gentile world? I need not inform you how long the ignorant country people in particular continued *pagans*, a word borrowed from their being chiefly the inhabitants of villages. Does not the history both of

the corruption and of the reformation of christianity prove the same thing? How many yet believe the doctrine of transubstantiation? and, what I think as much a case in point, how many yet believe the doctrine of the trinity! Had it not been for the force of this maxim, we should not have found an Archdeacon of St. Alban's employing the moderate share of learning that he is possessed of in the defence of a tenet so palpably absurd.

You seem, Sir, to speak with contempt of the doctrines of Calvin. I must however remind you, that the doctrinal articles of your church are Calvinistic. If you, therefore, be a true member of the church of England, believing *ex animo*, and in their plain obvious sense, all the thirty-nine articles, you yourself believe the doctrines of original sin, predestination, and every other tenet that is generally known by the name of *Calvinistic*. I do not tax you, as you repeatedly do me, with *insincerity*. I presume you really *do* believe the doctrines that are termed Calvinistic, and therefore I think you ought to have treated them with more respect. You ought also to have spoken with more respect of the Methodists. They as well as you are professed members of the church of England, and not Dissenters.

I am, &c.

LETTER IV.

Of the supposed orthodox Jewish Church at Jerusalem, and of the Veracity of Origen.

REV. SIR,

YOU speak of a church of trinitarian Jews, who had abandoned the law of Moses, and resided at Jerusalem, subsequent to the time of Adrian. Origen, who asserts that all the Jewish christians of his time conformed to the law of Moses, you say, must have known of this church, and therefore you do not hesitate, after Mosheim, to tax him with asserting a wilful falsehood. Error was often ascribed to this great man by the later fathers, but never before, I believe, was his *veracity* called in question. And least of all can it be supposed that he would have dared to assert a notorious untruth in a public controversy. He must have been a fool, as well as the knave you make him, to have ventured upon it. Your treatment of myself, however, gives me the less pain, when I see you not scrupling to fix a similar odium on the character of the respectable Origen. But what, Sir, would you not have said of me if I had been reduced to this dilemma in order to maintain my opinion? What an outcry did not you and Mr. Badcock make when I disputed the evidence of Eusebius, though I could confute him from himself*! and with respect to

* Pearson makes no difficulty of contradicting Eusebius in this case, and without making any apology for him at all. His opponent Mr. Daillé having said *if that account be true*, he replies, "He knew very well that, strictly speaking, it was not true; for he knew many others long before Theodotus, and not a few even before Ignatius, who taught the same heresy, a catalogue of whom may be seen in Epiphanius," and whom he proceeds to mention. Vindiciæ, lib. ii. cap. ii. p. 24.

integrity, the character of Eusebius never stood so high as that of Origen. But you, or rather your author, Mosheim, shall be heard.

"I shall take," you say, p. 59, "what you may think a bold step. I shall tax the veracity of your witness—of this Origen. I shall tell you that, whatever may be the general credit of his character, yet in this business the particulars of his deposition are to be little regarded, when he sets out with the allegation of a notorious falsehood. He alleges of the Hebrew christians in general, that they had not renounced the Mosaic law. The assertion served him for an answer to the invective which Celsus had put in the mouth of a Jew against the converted Jews, as deserters of the laws and customs of their ancestors. The answer was not the worse for wanting truth, if his heathen antagonist was not sufficiently informed in the true distinctions of christian sects to detect the falsehood. But in all the time which he spent in Palestine, had Origen never conversed with Hebrew christians of another sort? Had he met with no christians of Hebrew families of the church of Jerusalem when that church was under the government of bishops of the uncircumcision? The fact is, that after the demolition of Jerusalem by Adrian, the majority of the Hebrew christians, who must have passed for Jews with the Roman magistrates had they continued to adhere to the Mosaic law, which to this time they had observed more from habit than from any principle of conscience, made no scruple to renounce it, that they might be qualified to partake in the valuable privileges of the Ælian colony, from which Jews were excluded. Having thus divested themselves of the form of Ju-

daism, which to that time they had borne, they removed from Pella and other towns to which they had retired, and settled in great numbers at Ælia. The few who retained a superstitious veneration for their laws remained in the North of Galilee, where they were joined perhaps by new fugitives of the same weak character from Palestine. And this was the beginning of the sect of the Nazarenes. But from this time, whatever Origen may pretend, to serve a purpose, the majority of the Hebrew christians forsook their law, and lived in communion with the gentile bishops of the new modelled church at Jerusalem; for the name was retained, though Jerusalem was no more, and the seat of the bishop was at Ælia. All this I affirm with the less hesitation, being supported by the authority of Mosheim, from whom, indeed, I first learned to rate the testimony of Origen in this particular question at its true value."

Struck with this extraordinary narration of a transaction of ancient times, for which you refer to no authority besides that of Mosheim, I looked into him; but even there I do not find all the particulars that you mention. He says nothing of the Jewish christians having observed their law more from habit than any principle of conscience; nothing of their making no scruple to renounce their law in order to partake in the privileges of the Ælian colony; nothing of any Jewish christians removing from Pella and settling in Ælia; nothing of the retiring of the rest to the North of Galilee, or of this new origin of the Nazarenes there. For all these particulars therefore, learned Sir, you must have some other authority *in petto* besides that of Mosheim, and you ought to have produced it.

Also, as you adopt the assertions of Mosheim, I could wish to know his authority for supposing that there was any such thing as a church, or part of a church, of Jewish christians at Jerusalem after the destruction of that city by Adrian. As to your *additions*, they are a series of such improbable circumstances as hardly any historian of the time could make credible. Bodies of men do not, whatever you may imagine, suddenly change their opinions, and much less their customs and habits: least of all would an act of *violence* produce that effect; and, of all mankind, the experiment was the least likely to answer with Jews. If it had produced any effect for a time, the old customs and habits would certainly have returned when the danger was over. You might just as well suppose that all the Jews in Jerusalem began to speak Greek, as well as abandoned their ancient customs, in order to enjoy the valuable privileges of the Ælian colony. And you would have this to allege in your favour, that from that time the bishops of Jerusalem were all Greeks; the public offices were no doubt performed in the Greek language; and the church of Jerusalem was indeed in all respects as much a Greek church as that of Antioch.

As you say, p. 134, with respect to myself, "that a man ought to be accomplished in ancient learning who thinks he may escape with impunity and without detection in the attempt to browbeat the world with a peremptory and reiterated allegation of testimonies that exist not;" how much more accomplished ought that man to be, who now writes the history of transactions in the second century without alleging any testimony at all!

Mosheim himself, who began this accusation of Origen, produces no authority in his Dissertations for his assertion. He only says that he cannot reconcile the fact that Origen mentions, with his seeming unwillingness to allow the Ebionites to be christians. But this is easily accounted for from the attachment which he himself had to the doctrine of the divinity of Christ, which they denied; and from their holding no communion with other christians.

All the appearance of authority that I can find in any ancient writer, of the Jewish christians deserting the law of their ancestors, is in Sulpitius Severus, to whom I am referred by Mosheim in his History. But what he says on the subject is only what follows: "At this time Adrian, thinking that he should destroy christianity by destroying the place, erected the images of dæmons in the church, and in the place of our Lord's sufferings; and because the christians were thought to consist chiefly of Jews, (for then the church at Jerusalem had all its clergy of the circumcision,) ordered a cohort of soldiers to keep constant guard, and drive all Jews from any access to Jerusalem. Which was of service to the christian faith; for at that time they almost all believed Christ to be God, but with the observance of the law; the Lord so disposing it, that the servitude of the law should be removed from the liberty of the faith and of the church. Then was Marc the first bishop of the Gentiles at Jerusalem*."

* Qua tempestate Adrianus, existimans se christianam fidem loci injuria perempturum, et in templo ac loco dominicæ passionis dæmonum simulachra constituit. Et quia christiani ex Judæis potissimum putabantur (namque tum Hierosolymæ non nisi ex circumcisione habebat ecclesia Sacerdotem) militum cohortem custodias in perpetuum agitare jussit, quæ Judæos omnes Hieroso-

Where, Sir, do you find in this passage any promise of immunities to the Jewish christians if they would forsake the law of their fathers? On the contrary, the historian says that the object of Adrian was to overturn christianity, and that the Jews were banished because the christians there were chiefly of that nation. According to this account, all the Jews, christians as well as others, were driven out of Jerusalem; and nothing is said of any of them forsaking the law of Moses; and your assertion of their having been gradually prepared for it, by having before this time observed their law more from habit than from conscience, is unsupported by any authority or probability. Eusebius mentions the expulsion of the Jews from Jerusalem, but says not a word of any of the christians there abandoning circumcision and their other ceremonies on that occasion. Indeed such a thing was in the highest degree improbable.

Independent of all natural probability, had Sulpitius Severus actually written all that Mosheim advances, and all the curious particulars that you have added to complete the account; whether is it, Sir, from this writer or from Origen that we are more likely to gain true information on this subject? Origen writing in controversy, and of course subject to correction, appeals to a fact as notorious in the country in which he himself resided, and in his own times, to which therefore he could not but have given particular attention.

lymæ aditu arceret. Quod quidem christianæ fidei proficiebat; quia tum pene omnes Christum Deum sub legis observatione credebant. Nimirum id domino ordinante dispositum, ut legis servitus a libertate fidei atque ecclesiæ tolleretur. Ita tum primum Marcus ex Gentibus apud Hierosolymam episcopus fuit. Hist. lib. ii. c. xxxi. p. 245.

Whereas Sulpitius Severus lived in the remotest part of Gaul, several thousand miles from Palestine, and two hundred years after Origen, so that he could not have asserted the fact as from his own knowledge, and he quotes no other person for it. But in fact Sulpitius Severus is no more favourable to your account of the matter than Origen himself; so that to the authority of both of them, of all ancient testimony and natural probability, you have nothing to oppose but your own conjectures, and nothing to plead for this conduct, but that your poor and wretched cause requires it.

Having consulted Eusebius and other ancient writers to no purpose, for some account of these Jews who had deserted the religion of their ancestors, I looked into Tillemont, who is wonderfully careful and exact in bringing together every thing that relates to his subject; but his account of the matter differs widely indeed from Mosheim's and yours. He says (Hist. des Empereurs, tom. ii. part ii. p. 506.) "The Jews converted to the faith of Christ were not excepted by Adrian from the prohibition to continue at Jerusalem. They were obliged to go out with the rest. But the Jews being then obliged to abandon Jerusalem, that church began to be composed of Gentiles; and before the death of Adrian, in the middle of the year 138, Marc, who was of Gentile race, was established their bishop." He does not say with Mosheim that this Marc was chosen by the "Jews who abandoned the Mosaic rites." Hist. vol. i. p. 172.

Fleury, I find, had the same idea of that event. He says, Hist. vol. i. p. 316, "From this time the Jews were forbidden to enter Jerusalem, or even to see it at a distance. The city being afterwards inhabited by

Gentiles, had no other name than Ælia.——Hitherto the church of Jerusalem had only been composed of Jewish converts, who observed the ritual of the law under the liberty of the gospel; but then, as the Jews were forbidden to remain there, and guards were placed to defend the entrance of it, there were no other christians there besides those who were of Gentile origin; and thus the remains of the servitude of the law were entirely abolished."

Thus ends this church of orthodox Jewish christians at Jerusalem, planted by Mosheim, and pretty well watered by the Archdeacon of St. Alban's; from which you have derived such great advantage to your argument. But what evidence can you bring that the ancient Jewish church at Jerusalem, even before the time of Adrian, was trinitarian? If they were *Nazarenes*, Epiphanius represents them as unitarian when John wrote; and who was it that converted them from unitarians to trinitarians, and what evidence have you of any such conversion?

What became of the christian Jews who were driven out of Jerusalem by Adrian, does not appear. It is most probable that they joined their brethren at Pella, or Beræa, in Syria, from which they had come to reside at Jerusalem; and, indeed, what became of the whole body of the ancient christian Jews (none of whom can be proved to have been trinitarians) I cannot tell. Their numbers, we may suppose, were gradually reduced, till at length they became extinct. I hope, however, we shall hear no more of them as an evidence of the antiquity of the trinitarian doctrine.

I cannot help in this place taking some further notice of what you say with respect to this charge of a

a wilful falsehood on Origen. "Time was," you say, p. 160, "when the practice" (viz. of using unjustifiable means to serve a good end) "was openly avowed, and Origen himself was among its defenders." This, Sir, as is usual with you, is much too strongly stated; and, as you mention no authorities, you might think to escape detection. I believe, indeed, you went no further than Mosheim for it. Jerom, in his epistle to Pammachius, Opera, vol. i. p. 496, says that Origen adopted the Platonic doctrine, (and you, Sir, are an admirer of Plato,) of the subserviency of truth to utility, as with respect to deceiving enemies, &c. as Mr. Hume and other speculative moralists have done; considering the foundation of all social virtue to be the public good. But, Sir, it by no means follows from this, that such persons will ever indulge themselves in any greater violations of truth than those who hold other speculative opinions concerning the foundation of morals.

Jerom was far from saying as you do, that "he reduced his theory to practice." He mentions no instance whatever of his having recourse to it, and is far indeed from vindicating you in asserting, p. 160, that "the art which he recommended he scrupled not to employ; and that to silence an adversary he had recourse to the wilful and deliberate allegation of a notorious falsehood." Here, Sir, is much more in the conclusion than the premises will warrant. Many persons hold speculative principles, which their adversaries think must necessarily lead to immorality: but those who hold them should be heard on the subject; and the conclusion will not be just, unless they themselves connect immoral practices with their principles.

I find, Sir, that the characters of the *dead* are no safer in your hands than those of the *living*. I am unwilling to say a harsh thing, and I wish to avoid it the more, lest I should be thought *to return railing for railing:* but really, unless you can make a better apology for yourself than I am able to suggest, you will be considered by impartial persons as a *falsifier of history*, and a *defamer of the character of the dead*, in order to serve your purpose*.

LETTER V.

Of Heresy in the earliest Times.

REV. SIR,

I ASSERTED that the unitarians were not originally considered as *heretics*; and for this I have adduced a variety of arguments, one of the principal of which is, that the apostle John, though, according to all the evidence of antiquity, he could not but have known that unitarians were numerous in his time, never censures them; whereas he writes with the greatest indignation against the tenets which belonged to the opposite system of Gnosticism. I observed the same with respect to Hegesippus, Justin Martyr, and Clemens Alexandrinus. I now find the same to be true of Polycarp

* *The Archdeacon endeavours to establish his charge against Origen, part ii. chap. 1. of his Reply to these Letters. He complains with some reason, that Dr. Priestley imputes to him what were in fact the assertions of Mosheim, and he endeavours to prove the existence of an orthodox Hebrew church at Ælia upon evidence independent of Mosheim. Ibid. chap. 2.*—ED.

and Ignatius, and that even Irenæus, Tertullian, and Origen did not treat the unitarians as heretics.

You insist upon it, however, that John does censure the unitarian doctrine; which is curious enough, when, according to your account, there were no Ebionites or Nazarenes, that is, none who denied the pre-existence of Christ, till long after the time of John. But passing this, you acknowledge that the phrase *coming in the flesh* alludes to the proper humanity of Christ, and therefore respects the Gnostics: but you maintain that it likewise alludes to a *prior state;* so that we may necessarily infer from it, that he was a being of a higher rank before his coming in the flesh.

You say, p. 27, "The attempt to assign a reason why the Redeemer should be a man, implies both that he might have been, without partaking of the human nature, and by consequence that, in his own proper nature, he was originally something different from man; and that there might have been an expectation that he would make his appearance in some form above the human." But it is certainly quite sufficient to account for the apostle's using that phrase, *coming in the flesh,* that in his time there actually existed an opinion that Christ was not truly a man, but was a being of a higher order; which was precisely the doctrine of the Gnostics. That before the appearance of the Messiah any persons expected that he would or might come in a form above the human, I absolutely deny.

"A reason," you say, p. 27, "why a man should be a man, one would not expect in a sober man's discourse." But certainly it was very proper to give a reason why one who was *not* thought to be properly a man was really so; which is what the apostle has done.

As you call upon me so loudly to give any proof that the phrase *coming in the flesh* is descriptive of the Gnostic heresy only, and not of the unitarian doctrine also, I shall give an answer that may perhaps satisfy you; which is, that it is so used in the Epistle of Polycarp, the disciple of John. In a passage in this epistle, in which the writer evidently alludes to the Gnostics only, he introduces this very phrase, *coming in the flesh.* See sect. vi. vii. in Abp. Wake's translation, p. *55.* "Being zealous of what is good, abstaining from all offence, and from false brethren, and from those who bear the name of Christ in hypocrisy, and who deceive vain men. For whosoever does not confess that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, he is *Anti*christ; and whosoever does not confess his suffering upon the cross is from the devil; and whosoever perverts the oracles of God to his own interests, and says that there shall be neither any resurrection nor judgement, he is the first-born of Satan. Wherefore, leaving the vanity of many and their false doctrines, let us return to the word that was delivered from the beginning."

Had this writer proceeded no further than the second clause, in which he mentions those who did not believe that Christ suffered upon the cross, it might have been supposed that he alluded to *two* classes of men, and that the latter were different from those who denied that he came in the flesh. But as he goes on to mention a third circumstance, viz. the denial of the resurrection, and we are sure that those were not a third class of persons, it is evident that he alluded to no more than one and the same kind of persons by all the three characters. I conclude, therefore, that the

apostle John, from whom the writer of this epistle had this phrase, used it in the same sense, and meant by it only those persons who believed that Christ was not truly man, *i. e.* the Gnostics.

Besides, is it not extraordinary that, if this apostle conceived the indignation that you suppose him to have entertained against the unitarians, he should give no intimation of it except in this one ambiguous expression? You own that he marks the Gnostics clearly enough, and expresses the strongest aversion to them. How came he then to spare the unitarians, who have been so odious since? You must own that, in the course of his gospel, he inserts many expressions which, when literally interpreted, militate strongly against the doctrine of the divinity of Christ; as when, according to him, our Saviour says *the Father is greater than I; I can do nothing of myself; I live by the Father; the Father within me he doth the works. The Father is the only true God*, &c. If the apostle knew that there were in his time those who believed that Christ was a mere man, while he himself believed him to be God, is it not extraordinary that he should give them such an advantage from the language of our Saviour in his own gospel; and that he should have taken no care to qualify or explain it? Persons who are aware of a dangerous opinion, and wish to guard others against it, do not write as he does.

You will probably say that John taught the divinity of Christ with sufficient clearness in the introduction to his gospel, which might serve as a guard against any mistake with respect to such expressions as those above quoted. But it appears that the ancient uni-

tarians understood that introduction as we now do, taking the *logos* to mean not *Christ*, but the *wisdom and power of God* residing in him, and acting by him. The Noetian, in Hippolytus, says, "You tell me something new when you call the Son *logos**." And the oldest opinion on the subject is, that in that introduction John alluded to the Gnostics only, as he did in his epistles.

Ignatius also frequently mentions *heresy* and *heretics*, and, like John and Polycarp, with great indignation; but it is evident to every person who is at all acquainted with the history, learning, and language of those times, and of the subsequent ones, that he had no persons in his eye but the Gnostics only. I desire no other evidence of this besides a careful inspection of the passages. I shall recite only one of them, from the Epistle to the Smyrnæans, sect. iv. v. in Wake's translation, p. 116. Speaking of his own sufferings he says, "he who was made a perfect man strengthening me. Whom some not knowing do deny, or rather have been denied by him, being the advocates of death rather than of the truth, whom neither the prophets, nor the law of Moses, have persuaded, nor the gospel itself, even to this day, nor the sufferings of every one of us. For they think also the same things of us. For what does a man profit me if he shall praise me and blaspheme my Lord, not confessing that he was truly made a man? Now he that doth not say this, does in effect deny him, and is in death. But for the names of such as do this, they being unbelievers, I thought it not fitting to write them unto you.

* Αλλ' ερει μοι τις, ξενον μοι φερεις λογον λεγων υἱον. Contra Noetum, sect. xv. p. 16.

Yea God forbid that I should make any mention of them till they shall repent, to a true belief of Christ's passion, which is our resurrection! Let no man deceive himself," &c. He afterwards speaks of these persons abstaining from the eucharist and the public offices, " because they confessed not the eucharist to be the flesh of our Saviour Jesus Christ, which suffered for our sins, and which the Father of his goodness raised again from the dead. It will therefore," he adds, " become you to abstain from such persons, and not to speak with them, neither in private nor in public."

How like is this to the writings of the apostle John, and how well they explain each other! Here we see the *blasphemy* ascribed to the Gnostics, which Justin mentions, their separating themselves from the communion of christians, their denying the resurrection, and their pride. Now, how came this writer, like John, never to censure the unitarians if he had thought them to be heretics? That they existed in his time there never was a doubt, except what is just started in this last publication of yours. It can only be accounted for on the supposition that he himself as well as the apostle John were unitarians, and that they had no idea of any *heresies* besides those of the different kinds of Gnostics.

Pearson says that Ignatius refers to the doctrine of the Ebionites in his Epistle to Polycarp, and in those to the Ephesians, the Magnesians, and the Philadelphians; but I find no such references in them, except perhaps two passages, which may easily be supposed to have been altered; because, when corrected by an unitarian, nothing is wanting to the evident purpose of

the writer; whereas his censures of the Gnostics are frequent and copious; so that no person can pretend to leave them out without materially injuring the epistles.

Besides, there are in these epistles of Ignatius several things that are unfavourable to the doctrine of the divinity of Christ. Thus to the Ephesians he says, sect. v. "How much more must I think you happy who are so joined to him [the bishop] as the church is to Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ to the Father, that so all things may agree in the same unity!" To the Magnesians, sect. vii. he says, "As therefore the Lord did nothing without the Father, being united to him, neither by himself nor yet by his apostles, so neither do ye any thing without your bishop and presbyters."

What this excellent man said when he appeared before the Emperor Trajan, was the language of an unitarian. "You err," he said, "in that you call the evil spirits of the heathens gods. For there is but one God, who made heaven and earth, and the sea, and all that are in them; and one Jesus Christ, his only begotten Son, whose kingdom may I enjoy!" Wake, p. 131.

I am, &c.

LETTER VI.

Of the Sentiments of Justin Martyr, Irenæus, and Clemens Alexandrinus, concerning Heresy.

REV. SIR,

IF, after what I have seen in your *Charge* and in these *Letters*, I could be surprised at any thing you say on these subjects, it would be at your so confidently main-

taining, p. 79, that Justin Martyr had a view to the unitarians in those accounts of *heresy in general* which I quoted from him; when any person, with a small portion of that reading of which you pretend to so much, must know that every word and phrase in those accounts, especially the charge of *pride, atheism*, and *blasphemy*, is appropriated to the Gnostics, and the Gnostics only. I must take the liberty to say that you know nothing at all of the ancient ecclesiastical writers, if you can imagine that the unitarians are ever described by them in this manner. I am even ashamed to argue with any man who, if he has read the early fathers at all, has read them to so little purpose.

To me it is indisputably clear that Justin Martyr considered no other class of persons as heretics, unfit to have communion with christians, but the Gnostics only. Let any reasonable man but compare these passages in which he censures the Gnostics with so much severity, with those in which he speaks of the unitarians, (in which I still am of opinion he makes an apology to them for his own principles, but which certainly imply no censure,) and I think he cannot but conclude with me, that unitarianism was considered in those times in a very different light from what it was afterwards, and is now.

Justin also particularly mentions his having no objection to hold communion with those Jewish christians who observed the law of Moses, provided they did not impose it upon others. Dial. p. 23.* Now who

* This circumstance may throw some light on the passage in Jerom, in which he speaks of the Ebionites as anathematized solely on account of their adherence to the Jewish law. The Ebionites, at least many of them, would have imposed the yoke of the Jewish law upon the Gentile christians, they would not

could those be but Jewish unitarians? for, agreeable to the evidence of all antiquity, all the Jewish christians were such.

It is truly remarkable, and may not have been observed by you, as indeed it was not by myself till very lately, that Irenæus, who has written so large a work on the subject of heresy, after the time of Justin, and in a country where it is probable there were fewer unitarians, again and again characterizes them in such a manner, as makes it evident that even *he* did not consider any other persons as being properly heretics besides the Gnostics. He expresses a great dislike of the Ebionites; but though he appears to have known none of them besides those who denied the miraculous conception, he never calls them *heretics*. I had thought that in one passage he had included them in that appellation; but observing that in his introduction and other places, in which he speaks of *heretics in general*, he evidently meant the Gnostics only, and could not carry his views any further, I was led to reconsider that particular passage, and I found that I had been mistaken in my construction of it.

"All heretics," he says, "being untaught and ignorant of the dispensations of God, and especially of that which relates to man, as being blind with respect to the truth, oppose their own salvation; some intro-

communicate with those who were not circumcised, and of course these could not communicate with them; so they were necessarily in a state of excommunication with respect to each other. This would also be the case with the Cerinthians as well as the Ebionites, and therefore Jerom mentions them together, the separation of communion with respect to both arising from the observance of the law of Moses; though Jerom might write unguardedly, as he often did, in confounding the case of the Cerinthians so much as he here does with that of the Ebionites.

ducing another Father besides the maker of the world; others saying that the world, and the matter of it, was made by angels," &c. and after mentioning other similar opinions, he adds, "others not knowing the dispensation of the virgin, say, that he (Jesus) was begotten by Joseph. Some say that neither the soul nor the body can receive eternal life, but the internal man only*," *i. e.* that they denied the resurrection.

Now, as Cerinthus and Carpocrates, and other Gnostics, denied the miraculous conception, as well as the Ebionites, and all the rest of this description, both before and after this circumstance, evidently belongs to the Gnostics only, and as in no other place whatever does he comprehend them in his definition of *heresy*, it is natural to conclude that he had no view to them even here, but only to those Gnostics who, in common with them, denied the miraculous conception. If there be any other passage in Irenæus, in which he calls, or seems to call, the Ebionites *heretics*, I have overlooked it. The Ebionites were Jews, and had no communion with the Gentiles, at least that appears; and Irenæus says nothing at all of the unitarians among the Gentiles, who generally believed the miraculous conception, though, as appears from other evidence, they constituted the great mass of the unlearned christians.

Clemens Alexandrinus makes frequent mention of

* Indocti omnes hæretici, et ignorantes dispositiones Dei, et inscii ejus quæ est secundum hominem dispensationis, quippe cæcutientes circa veritatem, ipsi suæ contradicunt saluti. Alii quidem alterum introducentes præter demiurgum patrem. Alii autem ab angelis quibusdam dicentes factum esse mundum, et substantiam ejus, &c. Alii autem rursus ignorantes Virginis dispensationem, ex Joseph dicunt eum generatum. Et quidam quidem neque animam suam neque corpus recipere posse dicunt æternam vitam, sed tantum hominem interiorem. Lib. v. cap. xix. p. 429.

heretics, and expresses as much abhorrence of them as Justin Martyr does; but it is evident that, in all the places in which he speaks of them, his idea of heresy was confined to Gnosticism. He considers it as an answer to *all heretics* to prove that "there is one God, the almighty Lord, who was preached by the law and the prophets, and also in the blessed gospel *." He also speaks of heresy as "borrowed from a barbarous philosophy;" and says of heretics, that "though they say there is one God, and sing hymns to Christ, it was not according to truth; for that they introduced another God, and such a Christ as the prophets had not foretold." Strom. lib. vi. p. 675. See also p. 542. 662. He likewise speaks of heretics in general, as having a high opinion of their own knowledge, οιησιν γνωσεως ειληφοτων. Strom. lib. vii. p. 754. He calls them δοξισοφοι, *men who think that they have found the truth*, p. 755. and ὑπο δοξοσοφιας επηρμενοι, *elated with a conceit of their knowledge*, p. 759. He says that "heresy began in the time of Adrian," when it is well known that Basilides and the most distinguished of the Gnostics made their appearance. Strom. lib. vii. p. 764. He says the heretics went by different names, as those of Valentinus, Marcion, and Basilides, mentioning none but Gnostics, p. 765. It may only be conjectured that he meant the Ebionites by the *Peratici*, enumerated by him among those who had their denomination from the place of their residence. But this is the only passage in which the word occurs. He never includes the Gentile unitarians among heretics,

* Και ἁπασαις εντευθεν ταις αἱρεσεσιν ἑνα δεικνυναι θεον και κυριον παντοκρατορα, τον δια νομου και προφητων, προς δε και μακαριου ευαγγελιου γνησιως κεκηρυγμενον. Strom. lib. vi. p. 475.

and even your great authority, Mosheim, allows (what indeed he could not deny) that the unitarians lived in communion with the catholic church in the early ages.

As the strict Ebionites held no communion with the Gentile christians, it is very possible that Clemens Alexandrinus might insert them in a catalogue of heretics, and allude to them under the name of *Peratici*, without intending any censure of their doctrine with respect to Christ. Besides, this was a name given them, as he says, from their place of residence, and therefore did not include the unitarians among the Gentiles.

It is clear to me, from the attention that I have lately given to this subject, that even long after the doctrine of the divinity of Christ was established by councils and the decrees of emperors, the common people were well known to believe nothing of the matter; and yet, if they made no disturbance, and did not think proper to separate from the communion of the orthodox themselves, they were not excommunicated. This may be inferred from the passage which I quoted from Athanasius; but of which you have taken no notice, from which it appears that the unitarians were the οἱ πολλοι, *the many*. In the time of Tertullian they were the *major pars credentium*, the *greater part of believers*; and in the time of Origen they were the το πληθος, *the multitude*, and the τα πληθη, *the multitudes*.

I am, &c.

LETTER VII.

Of the State of Heresy in the Time of Tertullian.

REV. SIR,

NOTHING can well be more evident than that Tertullian represents the great body of unlearned christians in his time as unitarians, and even holding the doctrine of the trinity in great abhorrence. It is hardly possible in any form of words to describe this state of things more clearly than he does. Indeed, with respect to this you are pleased to make some concession, though by no means such as the case requires.

"I must confess, Sir," you say, p. 74, "here seems to be a complaint against the unlearned christians, as in general unfavourable to the trinitarian doctrine;" but you add, "the complaint is of your own raising. Tertullian will vouch but for a small part of it. *Simple persons*, says Tertullian, (*not to call them ignorant and ideots*,) *who always make the majority of believers, because the rule of faith itself carries us away from the many gods of the heathens to the one true God; not understanding that one God is indeed to be believed, but with an* ŒCONOMY (*or arrangement*) *startle at the œconomy. They take it for granted that the number and disposition of the trinity is a division of the unity. They pretend that two, and even three, are preached by us, and imagine that they themselves are the worshippers of one God. We, they say, hold the monarchy. Latins have caught up the word* MONARCHIA, *Greeks will not understand* ŒCONOMIA. Let our author's words be thus exactly

rendered, and you will find in them neither complaint nor acknowledgement of a general prevalence of the unitarian doctrine among christians of any rank. Tertullian alleges, that what credit it obtained was only with the illiterate, nor with all the illiterate, but only those who were ignorant and stupid in the extreme. To preclude the plea of numbers, he remarks that the illiterate will always make the majority of believers. *Some simple people*, he says, take alarm at the notion of a plurality of persons in the unity of the godhead."

Here, Sir, I complain of two gross misrepresentations of your author; the first respects the *number* of these simple people, and the second the degree of their simplicity, or, as you call it, *stupidity*. Whoever Tertullian meant by the *simplices* and the *idiotæ*, for any thing that appears, he meant the whole body of them. His language is general and unlimited, and therefore you are altogether unwarranted in your limitation of it to *some of them*. I really wonder at your assurance in this. I am far from construing Tertullian rigorously, and am ready to allow that *some* of these *simplices* and *idiotæ* might profess to believe the doctrine of the trinity, though he says nothing of it; but making all reasonable deductions on this account, he asserts a palpable falsehood, and against himself, if a very great majority of these *simplices* and *idiotæ* were not unitarians. On the whole, it is impossible not to infer from this passage, that in the time of Tertullian the great body of unlearned christians were unitarians, and that they were so in part from their construction of the *regula fidei*, or *the creed*, to which they gave their assent at baptism. They even regarded the doctrine of the trinity with horror, as nothing less than idolatry, en-

joining the worship of more gods than one. Common sense can put no other construction on this passage, and Tertullian is far from being singular in this acknowledgement. It is made in different modes by several of the fathers, even later than the age of Tertullian.

In the next place, I complain of the *degree* of simplicity, or, as you call it, stupidity, with which you charge these unitarians. Tertullian calls them *idiotæ*, which you render *ideots*, and this you have the assurance to call an *exact translation*. You say, p. 91, that I consult only the *ordinary lexicons*. Pray, Sir, in what lexicon or dictionary, ordinary or extraordinary, did you find this sense of the term *idiota* in Latin, or ἰδιωτης in Greek? Can you produce any passage in an ancient writer in which the word has that meaning? I will venture to say that it properly signifies *an unlearned man*, or a person who has not had a learned or liberal education. But such persons may have as good sense as those who have had that advantage, and may judge as truly concerning the great principles of religion as the most learned. The doctrine of one God, or two Gods, requires no knowledge of the learned languages; and you, Sir, perhaps, would have understood christianity no worse if you had never heard of the *Parmenides*.

It is most natural to interpret the language of any writer by the use of it in other writers of the same age, character, and profession. Now the translator of Irenæus certainly uses the word *idiota* (ἰδιωτης, no doubt, in the original Greek) for *an unlearned man*, without the least reference to any weakness of understanding. Speaking of the heretics, who boasted of their know-

ledge, he says, lib. v. cap. xx. "Non contemplantes quanto plurìs sit idiota religiosus a blasphemo et impudente sophista: Not considering how much better is a religious and unlearned man than a blasphemous and impious sophist." Certainly you would not render it *a religious ideot*, for ideots are incapable of religion. From the *blasphemy* here ascribed to heretics, who were Gnostics, you may also take a hint for the right understanding of the quotation from Justin.

Theodoret, in his explanation of 1 Cor. xiv. 16, says that "by ιδιωτης was meant *a layman*, because it is the custom to call those ιδιωτας who were not engaged in war;" meaning, perhaps, "those who had no public employments." Opera, vol. iii. p. 191.

Our translators of the New Testament had a very different idea from yours of the meaning of the word ιδιωτης. For in Acts iv. 13, we read that when Peter and John were examined before the High Priest and his kindred, "they wondered at their boldness, because they perceived them to be ιδιωται;" but it is not rendered *ideots*, which would have been absurd enough, but *unlearned and ignorant men.* In 1 Cor. xiv. the word occurs three times, and is always translated *unlearned*; and in 2 Cor. xi. 6, Paul calls himself ιδιωτης, and he could not be supposed to have called himself *an ideot.* It is there rendered *rude.*

One of your proofs, p. 83, that unitarianism was proscribed in the primitive church in the time of Tertullian, is his saying that the *regula fidei* in his treatise *de Præscriptione* was the belief of all christians. But every writer, if we wish not to cavil, but to understand his real meaning, must be interpreted in a manner consistent with himself. It is a degree of candour

that is due to all writers; and what you strongly plead for in the case of Eusebius. Now, concerning what we now call *the apostles' creed*, Tertullian expresses himself in such a manner (in his treatise *de Virginibus velandis*) as gives us clearly to understand that this was all that was necessary to the faith of a christian. This creed might be subscribed by any unitarian who believed the miraculous conception. The other creed, therefore, which is not the apostles', must be his own comment or exposition of the proper *regula fidei*, or creed, (and indeed it has all the appearance of a comment, as may be seen by the comparison,) and all that we can conclude from it is, that it contains his own opinion, which is well known from his writings in general.

To prove that the *regula fidei* in the treatise *de Præscriptione* was the belief of all christians in that age, you must prove that it was the creed that all christians gave their assent to; and this assent was only given at the time of baptism. But that *regula fidei* (which supposes the pre-existence of Christ) is no where to be found but in this particular passage in the writings of Tertullian; whereas that which is called *the apostles' creed* is, with some variations, frequently mentioned, and is known to have been the only creed that was used at baptism in the time of Tertullian, and long afterwards.

That Tertullian alluded to none but the Gnostics in the *regula fidei* of his treatise *de Præscriptione* is evident from every clause in it, and from the object of the work, which respects the Gnostics only, the unitarians being only occasionally and slightly mentioned in it. Though, therefore, a single feature in this ac-

count is found in the unitarians as well as in the Gnostics, it is the *whole character* that we are to attend to, and not that feature in particular.

In all other places in which I have found Tertullian to speak of *heresy in general*, it is most evident that his ideas went no further than to the opinions of the Gnostics, except that he once calls Hebion a heretic, and then he expressly makes his heresy to consist in his observance of the Jewish ritual*.

"Heresies," he says, "do not differ from idolatry, having the same author and the same work with idolaters; for that they make another God against the creator; or, if they acknowledge one creator, they discourse of him in a manner different from the truth†. Heretics," he says, "deny that God is to be feared‡;" which agrees with his saying that "the heathen philosophers were the patriarchs of heresy§," for they held that doctrine; but it was very remote from any thing that is ever laid to the charge of the unitarians.

"Heretics," he says, "associated with the magi, with fortune-tellers, with astrologers, with philosophers; being actuated by a principle of curiosity; so that the quality of their faith may be judged of from their manner of life, for discipline is the index of doctrine‖."

* Ad Galatas scribens invehitur in observatores et defensores circumcisionis et legis. Hebionis hæresis est. De Præs. s. xxxiii. p. 214.

† Neque ab idololatria distare hæreses, cum et auctoris et operis ejusdem sint cujus et idololatria. Deum aut fingunt alium adversus creatorem, aut, si unicum creatorem confitentur, aliter eum disserunt quam in vero. De Præscriptione, s. xl. Opera, p. 217.

‡ Negant deum timendum. De Præs. s. xliii. p. 218.

§ Hæreticorum patriarchæ philosophi. Adv. Hermog. s. viii. p. 236.

‖ Notata etiam sunt commercia hæreticorum cum magis, quam-

The whole of this account is inconsistent with Tertullian's considering unitarians as heretics; but much more is his saying that "the Valentinians were the most numerous of all the heretics*," and that "the heretics had nothing to do with their discipline. Their want of communion," he says, "shows that they are foreign to us†." For it is most evident that those whom he calls *simplices* and *idiotæ* were ranked by him among the *credentes*, or *believers*. They were even the *major pars credentium*, though unitarians, and holding the doctrine of the trinity in abhorrence.

Let any person judge from the whole of this, if it must not have been inconsiderate, at least in Tertullian, and inconsistent with himself, to call those persons heretics, who could not subscribe to that form of the creed which includes the article of pre-existence, and which was not assented to at baptism.

Tertullian also recites the articles of the creed in a third form, in his book against Praxeas. But as in the former he evidently had a view to the Gnostics only, so in this he had a view to the opinions of Praxeas, whom he was refuting. This, therefore, as well as the other, though delivered in the form of a creed, and said to be held by all christians, can only be considered as his own comment upon it, and as containing his own opinion. It is as follows:

"We believe in one God, but under that dispensa-

pluribus: cum circulatoribus, cum astrologis, cum philosophis, curiositati scilicet deditis.——Adeo et de genere conversationis qualitas fidei æstimari potest: doctrinæ index disciplina est. De Præscriptione, s. xliii. p. 218.

* Valentiniani frequentissimum plani collegium inter hæreticos. Adv. Valent. s. i. p. 250.

† Hæretici autem nullum habent consortium nostræ disciplinæ, quos extraneos utique testatur ipsa ademptio communicationis. De Baptismo, s. xv. p. 230.

tion which we call the *œconomy*; so that there is also a son of this one God, his word, who proceeded from him, by whom all things were made, and without whom nothing was made that was made; that he was sent by the Father into a virgin, and of her born man and God, the son of man, and the son of God, and called Jesus Christ; that he suffered, died, and was buried, according to the scriptures; that he was raised by the Father, and taken up into heaven; that he sits at the right-hand of the Father, and will come to judge the living and the dead; who thence, according to his promise, sent from the Father the holy spirit, the comforter, and the sanctifier of the faith of those who believe in the father, the son, and the holy spirit*."

Let the impartial reader then judge whether we are not more likely to find the genuine proper creed, which was considered as containing the *faith of all christians*, unmixed with any peculiar opinions of Tertullian's own, in the treatise *de Virginibus velandis*, in which he is not opposing *orthodoxy* to *heterodoxy*, but simply *faith* to *practice*.

I am really surprised that you should lay so much stress on the testimony of Tertullian, admitting it to be clear and uniform, which it is far from being, and

* Unicum quidem deum credimus, sub hac tamen dispensatione quam œconomiam dicimus, ut unici dei sit et filius sermo ipsius, qui ex ipso processerit, per quem omnia facta sunt, et sine quo factum est nihil; hunc missum a patre in virginem, et ex ea natum hominem et deum, filium hominis et filium dei, et cognominatum Jesum Christum. Hunc passum, hunc mortuum, et sepultum, secundum scripturas, et resuscitatum a patre, et in cælos resumptum, sedere ad dextram patris, venturum judicare vivos et mortuos, qui exinde miserit, secundum promissionem suam, a patre spiritum sanctum, paracletum, sanctificatorem fidei eorum qui credunt in patrem et filium et spiritum sanctum. Hanc regulam ab initio evangelii decucurrisse, &c. Adv. Praxeam, s. ii. p. 501.

also on that of Eusebius, with respect to the general faith of christians even in their own times, and much more in times preceding them, when it is so common for men to represent the opinions of those whom they esteem, as the same with their own. Every man should be heard with caution when he praises himself; and what he says in one place should be compared with what he says in another, and especially what he drops as it were accidentally, and when he was off his guard. As I said before, "their evidence in these cases is not to be regarded, unless they bring some sufficient proof of their assertions."

Had Tertullian, Origen, and others thought more highly of the *common people* than they did, we should probably never have known from them what their opinions were. But happily for us they thought meanly of them, and, without being aware of the use and value of the information, have given us sufficient lights into this very important circumstance in the history of their times. But in this, as well as in several other respects, you, Sir, have been led into several mistakes through your ignorance of human nature; the knowledge of which, and a due attention to it, would have been of much more service to you in these inquiries than your knowledge of Greek, in which, however, I do not perceive that you greatly abound. This ignorance of human nature appears in your insisting, p. 174, that if I admit the evidence of Eusebius for the existence of the Ebionites in the time of the apostles, I must admit his testimony to their condemnation of them.

As Theodotus who appeared in the time of Tertullian is called a heretic in the appendix to Tertullian's

book *De Præscriptione*, I think it probable that, after his excommunication, he formed a church of pure unitarians, and might be the first who set up a separate place of worship on that account, and therefore was denominated a *heretic* in the original sense of that word; and this circumstance might give rise to the opinion that he was the first who taught the doctrine.

When Eusebius wrote so as evidently to suppose that the Ebionites existed in the time of the apostles, you say, p. 173, "I consider it as an hasty assertion of a writer over zealous to overwhelm his adversary by authorities." I suspect that he may have been guilty of something like this, when he said that Theodotus was excommunicated by Victor on account of his unitarian principles. That he was excommunicated I admit; but that his unitarian principles was the sole ground of his excommunication I have some doubt, considering your own idea of the credit of the witness, which indeed is pretty much the same as my own.

I am, &c.

LETTER VIII.

Of Origen's Idea of Heresy.

REV. SIR,

WHAT I have said concerning Clemens Alexandrinus and Tertullian is true also of Origen, and these writers may help to explain each other. No man took more pains to inculcate the doctrine of the *logos* than Origen, and he thought meanly of those christians who did not adopt it, considering them as of an infe-

rior rank; but I believe he never classes them with *heretics*; and whenever he speaks of *heretics in general*, he, as well as all preceding writers, evidently had a view to the Gnostics only. See his Commentary on Matt. vol. i. p. 156, 159, 212, 287, 475, and many other passages in his writings.

In his treatise entitled *Philosophumena*, which is the first of his books against the heretics, it is evident that he considered none in that light besides the Gnostics, see p. 6, 8, and 16, of that work, as published by Wolfius at Hamburg in 1706.

In one place he evidently considers the unitarians and heretics separately, as two distinct classes of men; but supposes that the unitarians confounded the persons of the Father and the Son, on which account they were called *Patripassians*. But notwithstanding the evil that he says of them, he acknowledges that they adhered to their opinion, as thinking that it did honour to Christ, as on other occasions he ascribes it to their regard to the one true God the Father. "We are not," says he, "to consider those as taking the part of Christ who think falsely concerning him, out of an idea of doing him honour. Such are those who confound the intellect of the Father and the Son, distinguishing their substance in idea and name only; and also the *heretics*, who, out of a desire of speaking magnificently concerning him, carry their blasphemy very high, even to the maker of the world, are not on his side*."

* Ου νομιστεον γαρ ειναι ὑπερ αυτου τους τα ψευδη φρονουντας περι αυτου φαντασια, του δοξαζειν αυτον. ὁποιοι εισιν συγχεοντες πατερος και υἱου εννοιαν, και τῃ ὑποστασει ἑνα διδοντες ειναι τον πατερα και τον υἱον, τῃ επινοια μονῃ, και τοις ονομασι, διαιρουντες το ἑν

It is evident to me that in the time of Origen, viz. the beginning of the third century, the doctrine of the divinity of Christ was so far from being generally received, except by the bishops and the more learned of the clergy, that it was considered as a sublime doctrine, proper indeed for persons who had made advances in divine knowledge, but not adapted to the vulgar, who were content with the plain doctrine of Jesus Christ, and him crucified, looking no further than to his humanity, as it is delivered in the gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. John's doctrine of the *logos* was thought to be too sublime for the generality of Christians.

"No one," says Origen, "taught the divinity of Christ so clearly as John, who presents him to us, saying, I am the light of the world; I am the way, the truth, and the life; I am the resurrection; I am the gate; I am the good shepherd; and in the Revelation, I am the *alpha* and *omega*, the beginning and the end, the first and the last. We may therefore boldly say, that as the gospels are the first fruits (or most excellent part) of the scriptures, so the gospel of John is the first fruits of the gospels; the sense of which no person can conceive except he who reclines on the breast of Jesus, and who can receive from Jesus his mother Mary, and make her his own. He must be another John, who was shown by Jesus as another Jesus. For, he who is perfect does not himself live, but Christ lives in him; and since Christ lives in him, he says to

ὑποκειμενον. και οἱ απο των αἱρεσεων, φαντασιᾳ του μεγαλα περι αυτου φρονειν, αδικιαν εις το ὑψος λαλουντες, και κακως λεγοντες τον δημιουργον, ουκ εισιν ὑπερ αυτου. Comment. in Matt.;—Origenis Commentar. edit. Huetii, Rothomag. 1668, vol. i. p. 470.

Mary concerning him, Behold thy son, Christ himself *."

"This," says he, "we ought to understand, that as the law was a shadow of good things to come, so is the gospel as it is understood by the generality. But that which John calls the *everlasting gospel*, and which may be more properly called the *spiritual*, instructs the intelligent very clearly concerning the Son of God. Wherefore the gospel must be taught both corporeally and spiritually; and, when it is necessary, we must preach the corporeal gospel, saying to the carnal that we know nothing but Jesus Christ and him crucified. But when persons are found confirmed in the spirit, bringing forth fruits in it, and in love with heavenly wisdom, we must impart to them the *logos* returning from his bodily state, in that he was in the beginning with God †."

* Ουδεις γαρ εκεινων ακρατως εφανερωσεν αυτου την θεοτητα ὡς Ιωαννης, παραστησας αυτον λεγοντα, Εγω ειμι το φως του κοσμου, εγω ειμι ἡ ὁδος, και ἡ αληθεια, και ἡ ζωη. εγω ειμι ἡ αναστασις, εγω ειμι ἡ θυρα, εγω ειμι ὁ ποιμην ὁ καλος. και εν τῃ Αποκαλυψει, Εγω ειμι το α και το ω, ἡ αρχη και το τελος, ὁ πρωτος και ὁ εσχατος. Τολμητεον τοινυν ειπειν απαρχην μεν πασων γραφων ειναι τα ευαγγελια, των δε ευαγγελιων απαρχην το κατα Ιωαννην, οὐ τον νουν ουδεις δυναται λαβειν μη αναπεσων επι το στηθος Ιησου, μηδε λαβων απο Ιησου την Μαριαν γενομενην και αυτου μητερα. και τηλικουτον δε γενεσθαι δει τον εσομενον αλλον Ιωαννην, ὡς τε οιονει τον Ιωαννην δειχθηναι ὀντα Ιησουν απο Ιησου——και γαρ πας ὁ τετελειωμενος ζῃ ουκετι, αλλ' εν αυτῳ ζῃ Χριστος, και επει ζῃ εν αυτῳ Χριστος, λεγεται περι αυτου τῃ Μαριᾳ, Ιδε ὁ υἱος σου ὁ Χριστος. Comment. in Johan. vol. ii. p. 5.

† Και τουτο δε ειδηναι εχρην, ὁτι ὡσπερ εστι νομος σκιαν περιεχων των μελλοντων αγαθων, ὑπο του κατ' αληθειαν καταγγελλομενου νομου δηλουμενων, ουτω και ευαγγελιον σκιαν μυστηριων Χριστου διδασκει, το νομιζομενον ὑπο παντων των εντυγχανοντων νοεισθαι. Ὁ δε φησιν Ιωαννης ευαγγελιον αιωνιον, οικειως αν λεχθησομενον πνευματικον, σαφως παριστησι τοις νοουσι τα παντα ενωπιον περι αυτου του υἱου του θεου.——Διοπερ αναγκαιον πνευματικως και σωματικως Χριστιανιζειν, και ὁπου μεν χρη το σωματικον κηρυσσειν

"There are," says he, "who partake of the logos which was from the beginning, the logos that was with God, and the logos that was God, as Hosea, Isaiah, and Jeremiah, and any others that speak of him as the logos of God, and the logos that was with him: but there are others who know nothing but Jesus Christ and him crucified, the logos that was made flesh; thinking they have every thing of the logos when they acknowledge Christ according to the flesh. Such is the multitude of those who are called christians*."

Again, he says, "the multitudes (*i. e.* the great mass or body) of believers are instructed in the shadow of the logos, and not in the true logos of God, which is in the open heaven†."

These humble christians of Origen, who got no further than the shadow of the logos, and the *simplices* and *idiotæ* of Tertullian, were probably the *simplices credentium* of Jerom, who, as well as the heretics, he says, "did not understand the scriptures as became their majesty." For had these simple christians, within

ευαγγελιον, φασκοντα μηδεν ειδεναι τοις σαρκινοις η Ιησουν Χριστον και τουτον εσταυρωμενον, τουτο ποιητεον. εαν δε ευρεθωσι κατηρτισμενοι τω πνευματι, και καρποφοροῦντες εν αυτω, εραντες τε της ουρανιου σοφιας, μεταδοτεον αυτοις του λογου, επανελθοντος απο του σεσαρκωσθαι, εφ' ὁ ην εν αρχη προς τον Θεον. Comment. in Johan. vol. ii. p. 9.

* Οὑτω τοινυν οἱ μεν τινες μετεχουσιν αυτου του εν αρχη λογου και προς τον Θεον λογου, και Θεου λογου, ὡσπερ Ὡσηε και Ησαιας και Ιερεμιας, και ει τις ἑτερος τοιουτον ἑαυτον παρεστησεν ὡς τον λογον κυριου, η τον λογον γενεσθαι προς αυτον. ἑτεροι δε οἱ μηδεν ειδοτες ει μη Ιησουν Χριστον και τουτον, εσταυρωμενον, τον γενομενον σαρκα λογον, το παν νομισαντες ειναι του λογου Χριστον κατα σαρκα μονον γνωσκουσι. τοιουτον δε εστι το πληθος των πεπιστευκεναι νομιζομενων. Comment in Johan. vol. ii. p. 48, 49.

† Τα δε πληθη των πεπιστευκεναι νομιζομενων τη σκια του λογου, και ουχι τω αληθινω λογω Θεου εν τω ανεωγοτι ουρανω τυγχανοντι, μαθητευεται. Comment. in Johan. vol. ii. p. 52.

the pale of the church, inferred from what John says of the logos, and from what Christ says of himself, that he was, personally considered, equal to the Father, Jerom would hardly have said that they did not understand the scriptures according to their majesty: for he himself would not pretend to a perfect knowledge of the mystery of the trinity. "For these simple christians," he says, "the earth of the people of God brought forth *hay*, as for the heretics it brought forth *thorns**." For the intelligent, I suppose, it produced richer fruits.

From all these passages, and others quoted before, especially the *major pars credentium* of Tertullian, I cannot help inferring, that the doctrine of Christ being any thing more than a man, who was crucified and rose from the dead, (the whole doctrine of the incarnation of the eternal logos, that was in God, and that was God,) was considered as a more abstruse and refined doctrine, with which there was no occasion to trouble the common people; and it is evident that this class of christians was much staggered by it, and offended when they did hear of it. This could never have been the case if it had been supposed to be the doctrine of the apostles, and to have been delivered by them as the most essential article of christian faith, in which light it is now represented. Such terms as *scandalizare*, *expavescere*, &c. used by Tertullian, and ταραασσειν by Origen, can only apply to the case of some *novel* and

* Quod dicitur *super terram populi mei spinæ et fœnum ascendent*, referri potest et ad hæreticos, et ad simplices quosque credentium, qui non ita scripturam intelligunt ut illius convenit majestati. Unde singula singulis coaptavimus, ut terra populi dei hæreticis spinas, imperitis quibusque ecclesiæ fœnum afferat. In Is. xxxii. 20. Opera, vol. iv. p. 118.

alarming doctrine, something that men had not been accustomed to. In the language of Origen, it had been the *corporeal gospel* only, and not this *spiritual* and *mysterious* one, that they had been taught.

I am, &c.

LETTER IX.

Of the Light in which the Unitarians were considered in later Ages, and of the State of the common People at all Times.

REV. SIR,

IT appears from what has been advanced in the preceding letters, that, whatever might be the opinion of the more learned christians, and of course that of the *writers*, the bulk of the common people were not brought to a belief, or rather a profession, of the doctrine of the trinity till a pretty late period; and that, if they did not of themselves leave the communion of the orthodox, and raised no disturbance in the church, they were connived at. In fact, they were considered by the more learned as simple ignorant people, who knew no better, and who acquiesced in the doctrine of the simple *humanity* of Christ, because they were incapable of comprehending that of his *divinity*, and the sublime doctrine of *three persons in one God.* This must have been the case with the οἱ πολλοί, *the many*, or multitude, of Athanasius.

This writer, considering the violence of his character, speaks of the unitarians with a good deal of tenderness on account of the difficulty of understand-

ing the doctrine of the trinity. In my former letters I quoted a passage from him in which he represents them as the οἱ πολλοι, *the many*, and persons of a low understanding, but by no means as persons out of the church. Contrasting them with the Gnostics and the Arians, he says, "some persons considering what is human in Christ, seeing him thirsting, labouring, and suffering, and degrading him to a mere man, sin indeed greatly; but they may readily obtain forgiveness if they repent, alleging the weakness of the flesh; and they have the apostle himself administering pardon to them, and, as it were, holding out his hand to them, while he says, Truly, *great is the mystery of godliness, God was manifest in the flesh**."

According to him, many persons within the pale of the church must either have been unitarians, or have believed the doctrine of the trinity without understanding it; which in fact is no belief at all. Being consulted what was to be done with respect to the spread of the doctrine of *Paulus Samosatensis*, after acknowledging that persons of *low understandings* were chiefly infected with it, and quoting what Paul says of the *great mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh*, he says, "those who understand the subject *accurately* are few, but all pious persons may hold

* Ὅταν τινες, εἰς τα ανθρωπινα βλεποντες, ιδωσι τον κυριον διψωντα, η κοπιωντα, η πασχοντα, και μονον φλυαρησωσιν ὡς κατ' ανθρωπου του σωτηρος, ἁμαρτανουσι μεν μεγαλως. δυνανται δε ὁμως ταχεως μεταγινωσκοντες λαμβανειν συγγνωμην, εχοντες προφασιν την του σωματος ασθενειαν· εχουσι γαρ και τον αποστολον συγγνωμην αυτοις νεμοντα, και οιονει χειρα αυτοις εν τῳ λεγειν εκτεινοντα, ὁτι και ὁμολογουμενως μεγα εστι το της ευσεβειας μυστηριον, Θεος εφανερωθη εν σαρκι. In illud Evangelii Quicunque dixerit, &c. Opera, vol. i. p. 975.

the faith delivered to them *." But what kind of *holding* must it be, when they had no perfect understanding of what they held?

Gregory Nazianzen also represents the common people as excusable for their errors, and safe, from not being disposed to scrutinize into things †.

I have also observed many instances in writers so late as Chrysostom, who, notwithstanding the prevalence of a different mode of treating unitarians, use the term *heretics* in its ancient and proper sense for the Gnostics only. Here I shall content myself with one from Athanasius. He says, "The heretics make to themselves another maker of the universe besides the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ ‡." Indeed Athanasius considered the proper unitarians in a more favourable light than he did either the Gnostics or the Arians. See Opera, vol. i. p. 975, 977, 978.

Cyril of Jerusalem complains of heretics, both unitarians and Arians, in the bosom of the church. "Now," says he, "there is an apostasy; for men have departed from the faith, some confounding the Son with the Father, others daring to say that Christ was created out of nothing. Formerly heretics were open, but now the church is full of concealed heretics §." The more zealous of the orthodox bishops

* Ὅτι την μεν ακριβειαν αυτης επιζητειν ολιγων εστι, την δε πιστιν κατεχειν ἁπαντων των προς τον θεον ευπειθων. De Incarnatione, contra P. Samosat. Opera, vol. i. p. 592.

† Τοις μεν γαρ του λαου ταχα αν και συγγινωσκοιμεν τουτο πασχουσιν, ους σωζει πολλακις το αβασανιστον. Oratio xxi. Opera, vol. i. p. 388.

‡ Οἱ δε απο των αιρεσεων αλλον ἑαυτοις αναπλαττοντι δημιουργον των παντων παρα τον πατερα του κυριου ἡμων Ιησου Χριστου. De Incarnatione. Opera, vol. i. p. 55.

§ Νυν δε εστιν αποστασια· απεστησαν γαρ οἱ ανθρωποι της ορθης

might do something more than complain, but in general it may be presumed that they did not trouble themselves about the matter.

Complaints of the spread of heresy, both that of the unitarians, and that of the Arians in Asia Minor, in the time of Basil, by himself and his cotemporaries, are without end. Those opinions prevailed more especially among the *common people*, though many of the clergy were also infected; and what is remarkable, the malcontents complained loudly of his *innovations*, both with respect to ancient doctrines and ancient practices. For some time Basil, called *the great*, was obliged to give way to the storm, and retire from his diocese, though this it seems was a dangerous step; for, according to him, unremitted vigilance was necessary to guard their flocks from seduction. "If any person," he says, "leave his diocese for the shortest time, he leaves the common people exposed*."

I think we may learn from Facundus, who wrote so late as the reign of Justinian, that in his time many of the common people were well known to consider Christ as a *mere man*, and yet were not disturbed on that account. As the passage in his writings from which I infer this is a pretty remarkable one, I shall cite it at full length. Speaking of the condemnation of Theodorus, in whose favour he is writing, he says, that "in condemning him they condemned all those who thought as he did, even though they afterwards changed their

πιστεως, και οι μεν υιοπατοριαν καταγγελλουσιν, οι δε τον Χριστον εξ ουκ οντων εις το ειναι παρενεχθεντα λεγειν τολμωσιν, και προτερον μεν ησαν φανεροι αιρετικοι, νυν δε πεπληρωται η εκκλησια κεκρυμμενων αιρετικων. Cyrilli Catech. xv. p. 209. See also p. 5.

* Ει γαρ τις και προς το βραχυτατον της εκκλησιας αυτου αποσταιη εκδιοτους αφησει τους λαους τοις εφεδρευουσι. Basilii Epist. lxx. Opera, vol. iii. p. 114.

opinion.——What will they do with Martha, and then with Mary, the sisters of Lazarus, who were particularly attached to our Lord while he was upon earth? And yet both of them, first Martha and then Mary, are said to speak to him thus: *Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died;* who, though they thought that he was the Son of God who was to come into the world, yet would they not have said *if thou hadst been here*, if they had believed him to be God omnipresent. They therefore only thought as Theodorus is said to have done, and were excommunicated along with him; and how many of this kind do we know, by the writings of the apostles and evangelists, there were at that time, and how many even now are there still in the common herd of the faithful, who, by only partaking in the holy mysteries, and by a simple observance of the commandments, we see pleasing God; when even the apostles themselves, the first teachers, only thought as those whom we see to be included in this condemnation of Theodorus*."

The case is indeed the same, in a greater or less de-

* Condemnaverunt omnes ab ipso in quem illum incidisse putant errore conversos.——Ubi quid agent de Martha et Maria, sororibus Lazari, qua familiari devotione ipsi domino dum hic in carne degerit adhæserunt? Et tamen utraque, id est, prius Martha, ac deinde Maria, legitur illi dixisse, Domine, si fuisses hic, frater meus non fuisset mortuus. Quæ licet crederent quod ipse esset filius Dei qui in mundum venisset, tamen non dicerent *si fuisses hic*, si eum cognoscerent sicut Deum, ubique esse præsentem. Eadem ergo sapuerunt quæ dicitur sapuisse Theodorus, et cum Theodoro simul anathematisatæ sunt. Et quantos vel eo tempore in evangeliis et apostolicis scriptis tales fuisse cognovimus? Quantos etiam nunc tales in grege fidelium, sola sanctorum mysteriorum participatione, et simplici præceptorum obedientia, placentes Deo vidimus; cum et ipsi primi pastores ejus Apostoli sic aliquando sapuerunt, quos omnes cum Theodoro vidimus in hoc anathemate condemnatos. Pro Defensione trium Capitulorum, lib. x. c. vii. p. 162.

gree, at all times and in all churches. Quiet people will generally be indulged in their own way of thinking; and they are only those that disturb others that are themselves disturbed.

Is it not well known that there are both Arians and Socinians members of the church of England, and even among the clergy themselves; and yet if they can reconcile it to their own minds to keep in communion with a trinitarian church, there are no attempts made to molest them. Zealous as the *heads* of the church are (from the archdeacons to the archbishops) for the purity of its tenets, they think proper to connive at these things; and so they did in an age more zealous than this. The excellent Mr. Firmin was not only an avowed Socinian, and in communion with the church of England, but in habits of intimacy with Tillotson, and some of the most distinguished churchmen of his time.

At present there are Arian and Socinian writers within the pale of your church; and yet I dare say it never occurred to any archdeacon, bishop, or archbishop, that it would be proper to excommunicate any of them for the part they have acted. Such a thing as this might not have passed so easily in the time of Theodosius; but even then I make no doubt but that persons who could content themselves without disturbing others, would not have been molested.

You and I are both agreed that persons who do not *bonâ fide* hold the acknowledged tenets of any church (I mean such great and distinguished ones as those relating to *the object of worship*) ought to withdraw themselves from it, and not, by continuing in communion with it, to countenance its errors. But how many

are there who do not see the thing in the same light, or whose habits and prejudices are such, that they cannot bring themselves to act as we think every principle of *honour* as well as of *religion* dictates! And yet I cannot agree with you if you should say that all such persons are hypocrites, and insincere, doing what they themselves know and feel to be wrong. They have excuses which I doubt not satisfy their own minds, though they do not satisfy me. Great allowance, no doubt, is also to be made for the force of habit, and even for a natural timidity. There are many Erasmuses for one Luther, many Dr. Clarkes for one Whiston, a name which, notwithstanding the weakness of his judgement in some things, ought never to be mentioned without respect, on account of his almost singular and unparalleled uprightness.

As to the *common people*, the *idiotæ* of Tertullian, we generally see that, as they are not innovators in doctrine, they go to public worship where they have been used to do, without any nice discrimination of what is transacted there; and the observation will generally apply to the bulk of the inferior clergy. When Henry VIII. reformed the church of England, how many joined him in it who would never have declared themselves dissenters from the established church! The church is now trinitarian; but supposing that an Arian or Socinian parliament (which is a possible case in this inquisitive and fickle age) should change the established religion in that respect, how many do you think of the clergy (excepting those who possess the rank, the knowledge, and the zeal of Archdeacons, &c. and also those whom you would place in the *dregs of methodism*, p. 62.) would become dissenters? espe-

cially if, as was often the case in former times, they had no alternative but a prison with a good conscience, or their present emoluments without one. I rather think they would contrive to keep both, and soon make themselves perfectly easy in their new situation.

With respect to the *common people* in general, settled as you may think them to be in the doctrines of the church of England, perpetually hearing of *three persons and one God*, and daily making their responses to *the holy blessed and glorious trinity*; yet could they, without any preparation or discussion, hear Mr. Lindsey's reformed liturgy read to them by their usual ministers, and no Archdeacon should sound the alarm, but they were to take it for granted that all was done by order of their *superiors*, and therefore *right*, I dare say the peace of few parishes would be much disturbed by it.

These considerations, which are founded on such a knowledge of human nature as we may learn from all history, and our own daily observation, may render it credible that the majority of the common people, the *idiotæ* of Tertullian, though not the *ideots* of Dr. Horsley, might be unitarians, and yet continue in communion with the church after its forms became trinitarian, especially as they would not become so all at once. In the most ancient liturgies, you know, there were no prayers addressed to Christ; and as the members of christian societies were not required to subscribe to any thing*, there was nothing that they were expected to *bear a part in*, concerning which they might not be able to satisfy themselves. I am, &c.

* In the times in which the doctrine of the trinity was most agitated, some of the more zealous bishops proposed the *Nicene creed* and other tests to those who were in communion with them; but even then this practice does not appear to have been general.

LETTER X.

Of the Quotation from Athanasius.

REV. SIR,

IT is with very little effect, indeed, that you cavil at my quotation from Athanasius, and the defence I made of it. To every impartial reader it discovers how extremely averse the Jews were to the doctrine of the divinity of Christ; and, to borrow a word from you and Mr. Badcock, to what *management* the apostles were reduced in divulging this offensive doctrine to them. I have nothing to offer in addition to what I said on that subject, except that I have no objection to your rendering ευλογος αιτια, *a good reason*, instead of a *plausible pretence*; for I doubt not that it appeared a very good reason to Athanasius, who had nothing better to suggest.

Athanasius, however, by no means stands single in his view of the prejudices of the Jews, and of the conduct of the apostles with respect to them. Epiphanius, as quoted above, shows how prevalent the doctrine of the simple humanity of Christ was at the time that John wrote. There are also passages in several of the fathers, and especially a great number in Chrysostom, by which we clearly perceive that their idea of the conduct of the apostles was precisely the same with that which I have ascribed to Athanasius; and as it is possible that, by a different kind of instinct, my *rapid glances* may have discovered more passages of this kind than have occurred to you, in the actual *reading* and *study* of all the authors, I shall here produce one of them from the preface to his Commentaries on the Book of Acts.

After treating pretty largely of the conduct of the

apostles with respect to their insisting on the doctrine of the *resurrection* of Christ, rather than that of his *divinity*, immediately after the descent of the Holy Spirit, he says, "As to the Jews, who had daily heard, and been taught out of the law, *Hear O Israel, the Lord thy God is one Lord, and besides him there is no other*; having seen him (Jesus) nailed to a cross, yea having killed and buried him themselves, and not having seen him risen again, if they had heard that this person was God, equal to the Father, would not they have rejected and spurned at it." I want words in English to express the force of the Greek, in this place. The Latin translator renders it *nonne maxime omnes ab his verbis abhorruissent, ac resilissent, et oblatrassent.* "On this account," he adds, "they (the apostles) brought them forwards gently, and by slow degrees, and used great art in condescending to their weakness*."

In how different a light do Chrysostom and you represent the same thing! According to you, the Jews were always fully persuaded that their Messiah was to be God, equal to the Father; and therefore, after the apostles had persuaded them that Jesus was the Messiah, they had nothing to apprehend from their attachment to the doctrine of the unity of God, and had no occasion for any *art* or *management* with respect to it. However, their view of things, I doubt not, assisted

* Πως δε αν Ιουδαιοι, οἱ καθ' ἑκαστην ἡμεραν μανθανοντες, και ενηχουμενοι ὑπο του νομου, Ακουε Ισραηλ, κυριος ὁ θεος σου κυριος εἰς εστιν, και πλην αυτου ουκ εστιν αλλος, επι ξυλου σταυρου ιδοντες προσηλωμενον αυτον, μαλλον δε και σταυρωσαντες και θαψαντες, και ουδε αναστανταθεασαμενοι, ακουοντες ὁτι θεος εστιν αυτος ὁυτος, και τῳ πατρι ισος, ουκ αν μαλιστα παντων απεπηδησαν τε και απερραγησαν; Διατοι τουτο ῥημα, και κατα μικρον, αυτους προσειβαζουσι, και πολλῃ μεν κεχρηνται τῃ της συγκαταβασεως οικονομια. Chrysost. in Acta Apost. Hom. 1. Opera, vol. viii. p. 447.

[illegible] others, who lived nearer [illegible] present Archdeacon of St. [illegible] great number of unitarians [illegible] christians. Nor could they [illegible] among the Gentiles, considering, [illegible] that they could only learn christianity from the Jews; and it would have answered no end for the apostles to have spoken with caution to the Jews, and with openness to the Gentiles. Besides, according to Chrysostom, the Gentiles were not much better prepared to receive the doctrine of the divinity of Christ, than the Jews themselves.

In the same passage, part of which I have quoted above, after observing that, if the apostles had not conducted themselves in this cautious manner with respect to the Jews, their whole doctrine would have appeared incredible to them, he adds, "and at Athens Paul calls him (Jesus) simply a *man*, and nothing further, and for a good reason. For if, when they had heard Christ himself speaking of his equality to the Father, they would on that account have often stoned him, and called him a blasphemer; they would hardly, therefore, have received this doctrine from fishermen, especially after speaking of him as crucified. And why do I speak of the Jews, when at that time, even the disciples of Christ himself were often disturbed, and scandalized at him, when they heard sublime doctrines; on which account he said, I have many things to say to you, but ye are not yet able to bear them. And if they could not bear these things who had lived so long with him, and had received so many mysteries, and seen so many miracles, how could men from their altars, and idols, and sacrifices, and cats, and crocodiles;

for such was the worship of the heathens! But being first brought off from these abominations, they would readily receive their discourse concerning more sublime doctrines*."

But we find no trace of either Jews or Gentiles having received these sublime doctrines that Chrysostom alludes to in the age of the apostles. Nay he himself represents the apostle Paul as obliged to use the same caution with respect to the Jews, when he wrote the Epistle to the Hebrews, which was so late as A. D. 62, about two years before his death. And if the body of the Jewish christians were at that time unitarians, can it be thought probable that they became trinitarians soon afterwards? If the apostles themselves had not succeeded in this business, which required equal address and authority, who else can be supposed to have done it?

Chrysostom represents the apostle as beginning his epistle to the Hebrews with saying, that "it was *God* who spake by the prophets, and by his son, and not that *Christ* himself had spoken by them, because their minds were weak, and they were not able to bear the

* Εν δε Αθηναις, και ανθρωπον αυτον ἁπλως καλει ὁ Παυλος, ουδε πλεον ειπων. εικοτως. ει γαρ αυτον τον χριστον διαλεγομενον περι της εις τον πατερα ισοτητος, λιθασαι πολλακις επεχειρησαν, και βλασφημον δια τουτο εκαλουν, σχολη γαρ αν παρα των ἁλιεων τουτον τον λογον εδεξαντο, και ταυτα του σταυρου προχωρησαντες. Και τι δει λεγειν τους Ιουδαιους; ὁπουγε και αυτοι τοτε πολλακις οἱ μαθηται των ὑψηλοτερων ακουοντες δογματων εθορυβουντο και εσκανδαλιζοντο. δια τουτο και ελεγε, Πολλα εχω λεγειν ὑμιν αλλ' ου δυνασθε βαστα-ζειν αρτι. ει δε εκεινοι ουκ εδυναντο οἱ συγγενομενοι χρονον τοσουτον αυτῳ, και τοσουτων κοινωνησαντες απορρητων, και τοσαυτα θεασαμε-νοι θαυματα, πως ανθρωποι απο βωμων, και ειδωλων, και θυσιων, και αιλουρων, και κροκοδειλων, τοιαυτα γαρ ην των Ἑλληνων τα σε-βασματα, και των αλλων των κακων τοτε πρωτον αποσπασθεντες, αθροον τους ὑψηλους των δογματων εδεξαντο λογους; In Acta Hom. 1. Opera, vol. viii. p. 447.

doctrine concerning Christ*." He even says that "when he there speaks of Christ as above the angels, he still spoke of his humanity." See," says he, "his great *caution*, ορα την συνεσιν την πολλην, ib. p. 1755, the very expression used by Athanasius on a similar occasion, and which you think I have not rendered rightly, and have mistaken the sense of the passage, though Beausobre, the popish translator, and I shall now add Dr. Lardner, all understood it as I do.

It was the general opinion of the Fathers, as may be learned from Epiphanius and Jerom, quoted above, that it was John who first preached the doctrine of the divinity of Christ explicitly; and that when Matthew, Mark, and Luke, wrote their gospels, the christians in general, but more especially the Jews among them, were not prepared to receive a doctrine of such sublimity.

Chrysostom represents all the preceding writers of the New Testament as "children, who heard, but did not understand things, and who were busy about cheese-cakes and childish sports†; but John, he says

* Και θεα τι συνετως αυτο ειρηκεν. ου γαρ ειπεν ὁ θεος ελαλησε, καιτοιγε αυτος ην ὁ λαλησας, αλλ' επειδη ασθενεις αυτων ησαν αι ψυχαι, και ουδεπω ακουειν ηδυναντο τα περι του Χριστου, φησιν ὁ θεος δι αυτου ελαλησεν. In Heb. cap. i. Opera, vol. x. p. 1756. *i.e.* "See how prudently he spoke: for he said God spake, though it was himself that spake; but because their minds were weak, and they were not able to bear the things concerning Christ, he says *God spake by him*." N. B. The (ου) in the second clause of this passage must be inserted by mistake for (και), or some other particle, as it contradicts what is said in the close of the sentence, and the obvious sense of the whole.—[*The best editions read* Χριστος *for* Θεος. *See Horsley's Reply, p.* 34.—Ed.]

† Ὁι γε αλλοι ἁπαντες, καθαπερ τα παιδια τα μικρα. ακουουσι μεν, ουκ ισασι δε ἁπερ ακουουσιν, αλλα περι πλακουντας επτοηνται, και αθυρματα παιδικα. In Johan. Prolog. Opera, vol. viii. p. 2.

taught what the angels themselves did not know before he declared it *;" and he represents them as his most attentive auditors. Opera, vol. viii. p. 2. "Leaving the Father," he says, p. 11, "he [John] discoursed concerning the Son; because the Father was known to all, if not as a Father, yet as God, but the only-begotten was unknown †."

Observing that *in the beginning was the logos*, he says, "This was not preached immediately, for the world could not bear it. The evangelists Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John," (this last is inserted by some mistake,) "when they began the preaching, spake at a distance, and not immediately what became his dignity, but what was convenient for their hearers ‡."

Of the three first evangelists, he says, that "they all treated of the fleshly dispensation, and silently, by his miracles, indicated his dignity. The dignity of the logos of God was hid, the arrows against the heretics were concealed, and the fortification to defend the right faith was not raised by the pious preaching. John, therefore, the son of thunder, being the last, advanced to the doctrine of the logos," or the divinity of Christ §.

* Α μηδε αγγελοι πριν η τουτον γενεσθαι ηδεισαν. μεθ' ἡμων γαρ δη και ουτοι δια της Ιωαννου φωνης και δι' ἡμων εμαθον ἁπερ εγνωμεν. Prolog. in Johan. Opera, vol. viii. p. 2.

† Τι δηποτ' ουν τον πατερα αφεις, περι του υἱου διαλεγεται; ὁτι εκεινος μεν δηλος ἁπασιν ην, ει και μη ὡς πατηρ, αλλ' ὡς θεος, ὁ δε μονογενης ηγνοειτο. In Johan. Opera, vol. viii. p. 11.

‡ Εν αρχῃ ὁ λογος. Ουκ ευθυς τουτο εκηρυχθη. ου γαρ εχωρει ὁ κοσμος. Μακραν ἡμιν οἱ ευαγγελισται Ματθαιος, Μαρκος, Λουκας, και Ιωαννης, ὁτε ηρξαντο του κηρυγματος ουκ ευθυς ελαλησαν τα πρεποντα τῃ αξια, αλλα τα ἁρμοζοντα τοις ακροωμενοις. De Sigillis. Opera, vol. vi. p. 171.

§ Παντες ουν εχωρησαν εις την της σαρκος οικονομιαν, και ηρεμα πως, δια των θαυματων, εγνωριζον την αξιαν. Εκρυπτετο δε ετι του

Austin writes to the same purpose: "And if there be any other things which, to those who rightly understand them, intimate the divinity of Christ, in which he is equal to the Father, John almost alone has given them in his gospel*."

Theodoret observes, that, in the genealogy of Christ given by Matthew, this writer did not add *according to the flesh*, "because the men of that time would not bear it;" evidently meaning, that they would thereby have been led into a suspicion that, in the idea of the writer, he had some higher origin, and would have been offended at it; but the apostle Paul, he says, could not avoid that expression in his Epistle to the Romans. He adds, that, "before his death, not only to the other Jews, but to the apostles themselves, he did not appear as a God, nor did his miracles lead them to form that opinion of him†." This writer also says that the apostle Paul, in mentioning the subjection of Christ to the Father, in his Epistle to the Corinthians,

θεου λογου το αξιωμα. Εκρυπτετο δε τα κατα των αιρετικων βελη, και το της ορθης δοξης επιτειχισμα ουδεποτε τῳ κηρυγματι της ευσεβειας εγηγερτο. Ιωαννης τοινυν, ὁ υἱος της βροντης, τελευταιος, περιηλθεν επι την θεολογιαν. De Sigillis. Opera, vol. vi. p. 173. N. B. The sense of the passage absolutely requires εκρυπτετο and not εκηρυττετο in both the clauses, and in the latter it is so rendered by the Latin translator, though not in the former. The observation, that the first verses in the gospel of John are a refutation of all heresies is common with the Fathers. No person, except one who is pretty well conversant with them, can imagine how often those verses occur in their writings.

* Et si qua alia sunt, quæ Christi divinitatem, in qua æqualis est patri, recte intelligentibus intiment, pene solus Joannes in evangelio suo posuit. Austin de Consensu Evangelistarum, Opera, vol. iv. p. 374.

† Προ μεν του σταυρου και του παθους, ὁ δεσποτης Χριστος ου μονον τοις αλλοις Ιουδαιοις, αλλα και αυτοις αποστολοις ουκ εδοκει ειναι θεος——και ουδε τα θαυματα αυτους προς ταυτην εποδηγει την δοξαν. In Rom. lib. iv. Opera, vol. iii. p. 11.

"spake of him more lowly than was necessary on account of their weakness." 1 Cor. xv. Opera, vol. iii. p. 201.

And yet you, Sir, who have no doubt read, considered, and re-considered, all these passages, and many more than I can produce to the same purpose, can say, p. 93, "The desire of instructing the Jews, not the fear of offending them, was the motive with the apostles for propounding first what was the easiest to be understood, and the most likely to be admitted;" and even add, you cannot read without astonishment, that I should suppose that Athanasius meant to intimate that they were afraid of giving offence to the Jews.

When we consider how late the three first gospels were written, the last of them not long before that of John, which was near, if not after the destruction of Jerusalem, and that, in the opinion of these writers above mentioned, all this caution and reserve had been necessary on the part of the christian teachers, how is it possible that, in their idea, the christian church in general should have been well established in the belief of our Lord's divinity? It could only have been great and open zeal on the part of the apostles, and not the *caution* and *management* which these writers ascribe to them, that could have effectually taught a doctrine which, according to them, they were ill prepared to receive. And the history of both Peter and Paul sufficiently prove, that the influence of mere apostolical authority was not so great at that time as many persons now take it to have been. Whatever powers they had, they were not considered as *lords over the faith of christians.*

The christians of that age required something more than the private opinion of an apostle. They required some supernatural evidence that his doctrine was from God; and we have no account of the apostles proposing to them this article of faith, and alleging any such evidence for it. Chrysostom says, that "if the Jews were so much offended at having a new law superadded to their former, how much more would they have been offended if Christ had taught his own divinity." May it not be supposed, therefore, that they would have required as particular evidence of a divine revelation in the one case as in the other? And what remarkably strong evidence was necessary to convince them that the obligation of their law did not extend to the Gentiles? Would they, therefore, have received what Chrysostom considered as the more offensive doctrine of the two, without any pretence to a particular revelation on the subject?

It may be said that all the caution of which we have been speaking was necessary with respect to the *unbelieving Jews only*, into whose hands these gospels and the other writings of the New Testament might fall. But how impossible must it have been to conceal from the unbelieving Jews the doctrine of the divinity of Christ, if it had been a favourite article with the *believing Jews!* If this had been the case, it could not but have been known to all the world; and therefore all the offence that it could have given would have been unavoidable. So that this supposed caution of the evangelists, &c. would have come too late, and would have answered no purpose whatever.

This caution, therefore, must necessarily have respected those persons into whose hands the gospels, &c.

were most likely to come, and who would give the most attention to them; and these were certainly the believing Jews, and the christian world at large, and not unbelievers of any nation. And we are authorized to conclude that, in the opinion of the writers who have spoken of it, of whatever weight that opinion may be, this caution in divulging the doctrine of the divinity of Christ was necessary with respect to the great body of christians themselves, and especially the Jewish christians. Consequently, they must have supposed that at the time of these publications, which was about A. D. 64, the doctrine of the divinity of Christ was not generally held by christians, and that there would have been danger of giving them great offence if it had been plainly proposed to them by the apostles themselves. At this time therefore it may be inferred, that, in the opinion of these writers, the christian church was principally unitarian, believing only the simple humanity of Christ, and knowing nothing of his divinity or pre-existence.

From the acknowledgment which these orthodox fathers could not help virtually making, (for certainly they would not do it unnecessarily any more than yourself,) that there were great numbers of proper unitarians in the age of the apostles, it seems not unreasonable to conclude that there were great numbers of them in the age immediately following, and in their own; and their knowledge of this might be an additional reason for the opinion that they appear to have formed of that prevalence in the apostolic age. Would those fathers have granted to their enemies spontaneously, and contrary to truth, that the Jews were strongly prepossessed against the doctrine of the divinity of Christ,

and that the unitarians were a formidable body of christians while the apostles were living, if it had been in their power to have denied the facts? The consequence of making these acknowledgements is but too obvious, and must have appeared so to them, as well as it now does to you, which makes you so unwilling to make it after them.

You say that the unitarian Jews mentioned by Athanasius were not christians, and that the Gentiles to whom they taught the doctrine of the humanity of the Messiah were mere heathen Greeks. "Have you forgotten, Sir," you say, p. 97, "have you never known, or would you deny, what is not denied by candid infidels, that the expectation of a great deliverer or benefactor of mankind was universal even in the Gentile world about the time of our Lord's appearance." This, however, I do very much question, and I should be glad to know the names of the candid infidels who have acknowledged it.

An expectation of a Messiah certainly existed among the Jews, and of course among their proselytes; but if any such idea had been universal among the Gentiles, so as to interest them in discussions about the nature of this great deliverer, as whether he was to be God or man, &c. we should certainly have perceived some traces of it in their writings. It might have been expected that, on account both of the interesting nature and of the obscurity of the subject, there would have been different opinions about it, that it would have been a common topic in their philosophical schools; and that their historians would have given some account of the origin and foundation of this universal opinion.

You will produce, I suppose, Virgil's sixth eclogue. But, Sir, can you believe that even Virgil himself really expected any such person as he describes? The use that the poets might make of a vague report of a prophecy brought probably from the east, and ultimately from the Jewish scriptures, (but seriously believed by no person that we know of,) merely to embellish a poem, is one thing; but the actual and universal expectation of such a person is another.

I am, &c.

LETTER XI.

Of the Time when Christ began to be considered as God, and the Opinion of the ancient and modern Jews with respect to the Messiah.

REV. SIR,

I TOOK the liberty to request that you would endeavour to fix the time when the apostles and primitive christians began to consider Christ as God, or even the maker of the world under God; taking it for granted that at the first they supposed him to be a mere man. This I thought no person living would have denied. That the Jews expected only a man for their Messiah is clearly supposed by Justin Martyr and all the christian fathers. The Jews of their time were perpetually objecting to the christian doctrine on account of their making Christ to be a God, and I have no doubt but that the expectation of the Jews at this day is the same with that of their ancestors two thousand years ago.

You, Sir, have however ventured to deny all this. Speaking of the apostles, you say, p. 107, that "from their first acknowledgement of our Lord as the Messiah, they equally acknowledged his divinity. The Jews," you say, p. 109, "in Christ's days had notions of a trinity in the divine nature. They expected the second person, whom they called the Logos, to come as the Messiah*. For the proof of these assertions I refer you to the work of the learned Dr. Peter Allix, entitled, The Judgment of the ancient Jewish Church against the Unitarians; a work which it is to be hoped, Sir, you will carefully *look through* before you send abroad your intended View of the Doctrine of the first Ages concerning Christ."

When my stock of amusement from the writings of Bishop Bull is exhausted, which is by no means the case at present, I may perhaps throw away a few shillings on this Dr. Allix†. In the mean time, without entering into a large discussion on the subject, I shall only ask you a question or two relating to it, and you may answer me out of Dr. Allix if you please. Inform me then, if you can, how our Saviour could possibly, on your idea, have puzzled the Jewish doctors as

* On this subject the opinion of the Fathers is unanimous, and against Dr. Horsley. They say indeed that the doctrine of the trinity may be proved from the Old Testament, but that it was delivered so obscurely on account of the proneness of the Jews to idolatry that they did not understand it. Theodoret says, Επειδη γαρ Εβραιοις εγραφεν, οἱ μονον τιμαν εἰωθασι τον πατερα, αναγκαιως το δι αυτου προσεθεικε. *i. e.* "The Jews had been accustomed to worship the Father only, and for that reason the writer of the epistle to the Hebrews was obliged to say, *By him let us offer sacrifices to God continually.*" In Heb. Opera, vol. iii. p. 461.

† Some account of Dr. Allix's opinion, and also of the confutation of it by Prideaux and Capellus, may be seen in Mr. Lindsey's Apology, p. 88, note.

he did, reducing them to absolute silence by asking them how David could call the Messiah his Lord, when he was his son or descendant. For if they had themselves been fully persuaded, as you suppose, that the Messiah, though carnally descended from David, was in fact the maker and the God of David, and of them all, a very satisfactory answer was pretty obvious. Or without asking any other question of my own, what say you to Facundus, quoted above, who says that "Martha and Mary would never have said to Christ *if thou hadst been here*, had they thought him to be God omnipresent." He adds, "neither would Philip have said to him *Show us the Father*, if he had entertained any such idea of him."

Facundus also says that the Jews always had expected, and in his time did expect, a mere man for their Messiah. "They did not know," he says, "that Christ, the Son of God, was God, but they thought that Christ would be a mere man, which any one may perceive that the Jews at this time also think*."

I am willing, however, to consider a few of the things which you have advanced in order to give some degree of plausibility to this strange hypothesis. "So far," you say, p. 107, "as they (the apostles) believed in Jesus as the Messiah, in the same degree they understood and acknowledged his divinity. The proof which I have to produce of this from holy writ consists of too many particulars to be distinctly enumerated in the course of our present correspondence. I shall mention two, which to any but a decided unita-

* Sed non propterea Christum dei filium, deum sciebant; hominem autem purum arbitrati sunt Christum.——Quod etiam nunc putantes Judæos quilibet videbit. Lib. ix. cap. lii. p. 139.

rian will be very striking. Nathaniel's first profession, and Peter's consternation at the miraculous draught of fishes. It was in Nathaniel's very first interview with our Lord that he exclaimed *Rabbi, thou art the Son of God! thou art the King of Israel!* and this declaration was drawn from Nathaniel by some particulars in our Lord's discourse, which he seems to have interpreted as indications of omniscience. When Simon Peter saw the number of fishes taken at a single draught, when the net was cast at our Lord's command, after a night of fruitless toil, he fell down at the knees of Jesus, saying, Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord. Peter's consternation was evidently of the same sort of which we read in the worthies of earlier ages, upon any extraordinary appearance of the light of the Shechinah, which was founded on a notion that a sinful mortal might not see God and live."

With respect to Nathaniel's calling Jesus the *Son of God*, this phrase was, in the mouth of a Jew, synonymous to the *Messiah*, or *Son of David*, and it is fully explained by the subsequent expression of Nathaniel himself, viz. *King of Israel;* and therefore, the Jewish doctors, expecting nothing more in their Messiah than a glorious *King of Israel*, such as David had been, could not give any satisfactory reason why David should call him *Lord*, having no notion of his spiritual kingdom, extending to all mankind. If the mere appellation *Son of God*, implies *equality with God*, Adam must have been a God, for he is called the Son of God, Luke iii. 38. Solomon also must have been God; and so must all christians, for they are called *Sons of God*. 1 John iii. 2. John i. 12. Rom. viii. 14. Phil. ii. 15.

As you are so intimately acquainted with the Fathers, you must have known the construction that Chrysostom puts upon the language of Nathaniel; and as he was unquestionably orthodox, I should have thought that it might have had some weight with you. He says, that "in this speech Nathaniel confessed Christ as a man, as appears by his adding, *Thou art the King of Israel.*" In John, Opera, vol. viii. p. 106.

As to what you call *omniscience*, you will hardly say it was a greater degree of knowledge than it is in the power of God to impart to a man. After our Saviour had performed what you, I suppose, will call an act of *omnipotence*, all the conclusion that the spectators drew from it was, that *God had given such power unto men.* Matt. ix. 8. They did not infer from it that he himself was God, or pretended to be God; and yet they probably thought that he was the Messiah.

As to the consternation of Peter, I should imagine that by the same mode of interpretation you might conclude that the widow of Zarephath took Elijah to be a God; for on the death of her son, she said, 1 Kings xvii. 18. *What have I to do with thee, O thou man of God? art thou come to me to call my sins to remembrance, and to slay my son?* Pray, Sir, why might not the exclamation of Peter be considered as being of the same nature with that of this woman? The language is very similar, and I will not answer for it, but that you, not being a decided unitarian, may really be of opinion, that she took the prophet to be God incarnate.

Your proof of the doctrine of the trinity, from a verse in the first sermon of Peter on the day of Pentecost, is particularly curious. It is as follows: Acts

ii. 33. *Jesus being by the right-hand of God, exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the holy ghost, has shed forth this,* &c. "I shall maintain," you say, p. 101, "that the three persons are distinctly mentioned, in a manner which implies the divinity of each." Well may you say, p. 102, that you shall "argue thus for the edification of your own flock, but with little hope of *my* conviction, from Peter's first sermon."

Indeed, Sir, I see nothing in this passage but as perfect a dependence of Christ upon God as any man can have. Why should Christ receive the Holy Spirit from the Father, according to a preceding promise, if he had been as much in the power of the Son as of the Father? And why must the Holy Spirit be so much at the absolute disposal of either of them, if he was God in his own right, and of course independent, as much as the Father himself?

The Father, you say, "is distinguished from the Son by not being called God in this place. Paternity is the property that distinguishes the person. But from whom is this first principle distinguished? From his creatures? From them he were more significantly distinguished by the name of *God.*" But, Sir, to adopt your own language, have you forgot, or did you never learn, that we, who are mere mortal men, are taught to address God by the appellation of *Father*, as well as that Christ himself prayed to God by the same title? What weight then is there in the argument that you draw from this circumstance? Indeed, Sir, you must be happy in a very tractable flock, if such provision as this will satisfy them. You would make a sad exchange of your flock for mine. If such arguments do

not of themselves expose a cause, I do not know what can do it. It is well for your cause that it has other supports besides *arguments*.

Considering the case of Stephen, which is your capital argument for the worship of Jesus Christ, you say, p. 102, "What could be the blasphemy against God" (with which he was charged) "what was there in the doctrine of the apostles which could be interpreted as blasphemy against God, except it was this, that they ascribed divinity to one who had suffered publicly as a malefactor?" You therefore say, "I shall always insist that the blessed Stephen died a martyr to the deity of Christ." As you have formed this resolution, it would be presumption in me to imagine that I could change it, and perhaps all your opinions are as fixed as the laws of the Medes and Persians. Otherwise I might suggest that to a Jew, blasphemy against Moses, by whom God spake, would naturally be considered as blasphemy against the God by whom he spake; on the same principle as our Saviour says, Matt. x. 40, *He that receiveth you, receiveth me; and he that receiveth me, receiveth him that sent me.*

Besides, we are expressly told what was the *blasphemy* with which Stephen was charged, Acts vi. 11, viz. *against Moses and against God, against this holy place and the law;* and this is fully explained as follows, ver. 14, *For we have heard him say, that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and change the customs which Moses delivered us.* This was the whole of the accusation, very clearly stated, and where do you find any thing said concerning the *deity of Christ?*

I shall consider another of your curious arguments.

You say, p. 101, "I shall particularly desire them" (*i. e.* your gentle flock above mentioned) "to remark, that it is said of our Lord Jesus, that it was not possible that he should be holden of death. The expressions clearly imply a *physical impossibility*." But as we read that *it is impossible for God to lie*, it may be said that as God had foretold the resurrection of Christ, it was impossible but that it must take place. As to a proper *natural impossibility*, the fact is clearly against you; for if it had been naturally impossible for him to be *holden of death*, it must certainly have been naturally impossible for him to have died at all; and if death could hold him *three days*, it might for any thing which appears *in nature*, have held him *for ever*, if the divine power, a power foreign to himself, had not interposed. Accordingly we read, not that he raised himself, but that *God raised him from the dead*. Use, no doubt, will reconcile the minds of men to strange conceptions of things, and strange language; or I should wonder that you should not be shocked at the idea of *God's dying*. For when you speak of the natural impossibility of Christ's being holden of death, you must certainly have an idea of something more than the death of *his body*.

You, Sir, suppose that our Lord's disciples might have conversed with him as familiarly as they did, and have taken the liberties with him which they sometimes did (as when Peter rebuked him for complaining of being touched in a crowd, &c. &c.) and yet have considered him as their God and maker. You say, p. 148, "the most that could be inferred, were the assumption true, would be something strange in their conduct, and even this might be a hasty inference. The singularity

of their conduct might disappear if the accounts they had left of our Lord's life on earth, and of their attendance upon him, were more circumstantial. But the truth is, that the foundations of this argument are unsound." After mentioning instances in which you think they invoked him as a deity, you say, "If the angels Michael or Gabriel should come and live among us in the manner which you suppose, I think we should soon lose our habitual recollection of their angelic nature. It would be only occasionally awakened by extraordinary incidents. This, at least, would be the case if they mixed with us upon an *even footing*, without assuming any badges of distinction, wearing a common garb, partaking of our lodging, and of our board, suffering in the same degree with ourselves from hunger and fatigue, and seeking the same refreshments. The wonder would be if angels, in this disguise, met with any other respect than that which dignity of character commands, and something of occasional homage when their miraculous help was needed. This was the respect which our Lord met with from his followers."

To this, I can only say, that I am really astonished how you can entertain the idea of any number of persons living on this *even footing*, as you call it, with a being whom they actually believed to be the maker of themselves, and of all things, even the eternal God himself. Certainly, Sir, you never attempted to realize the idea, or even thought of putting yourself in their place, so as to have imagined yourself introduced into the actual presence of your Maker, in the form of man, or any other form whatever. You must have been overwhelmed with the very thought of it; or if *you* should have had the courage, and unparalleled self possession,

to bear such a thing, must there not have been numbers who would have been filled with consternation at the very idea, or the mere *suspicion*, of the person they were speaking to being really God. And yet we perceive no trace of any such consternation and alarm in the gospel history, no mark of astonishment in the disciples of our Lord in consequence of the belief of it, and no marks of indignation or exclamation of blasphemy, &c. against those who disbelieved it.

I am surprised to find how very differently you think from your *holy father* Athanasius on this subject. He says, "I will venture to say, that the blessed disciples themselves, had no perfect persuasion concerning his divinity, till the descent of the spirit at Pentecost*."

Chrysostom frequently observes that Christ only intimated his divinity obscurely, and left the full discovery of it to his apostles. Thus he says, that he himself never said plainly that he made the heavens and the earth, and the sea, and all things visible and invisible†. And why," says he, "do you wonder that others should have said greater things of him than he has said of himself, when he explained many things by actions, but never clearly in words. That he made *man*, he showed clearly enough, as by the blind man; but when he was discoursing about the formation of the first man, he did not say, *I made them*, but *he that made them*, made them, male and female. And that he made the

* Τολμω γαρ λεγειν ὁτι ουδε αυτοι ὁι μακαριοι αυτου μαθηται το τελειον περι της αυτου θεοτητος ειχον φρονημα, ἑως το πνευμα το ἁγιον αυτοις τῃ πενταχοστῃ επεφοιτησεν. De Communi Essentia. Opera, vol. i. p. 237.

† Ὁτι ουρανον, και γην, και θαλατταν αυτος εποιησε, και τα ὁρωμενα, και τα αορατα παντα, αυτος μεν ουδαμου σαφως ειρηκεν. In Matt. cap. v. Hom. 16. Opera, vol. vii. p. 154.

world he signified by the fishes, by the wine, by the loaves, &c. but never clearly in words *." He even says, "it was more necessary to be concealed from his disciples, because they would immediately have told every thing through an excess of joy †."

"Christ," he says, "did not reveal his divinity immediately; but was first thought to be a prophet, and the Christ simply a man, and it afterwards appeared by his works and his sayings what he really was ‡."

There is one important circumstance relating to this subject, of which you have taken no notice at all, which is this: If the apostles had really preached the doctrine of the divinity of Christ from the first, and consequently it had always been the belief of the christian church, the unbelieving Jews must have heard of it. Would they not, therefore, have objected to it as loudly as they did in the times of the christian Fathers, and as they do at this day? How is it then, that neither in the Acts of the Apostles, nor in any of the Epistles, we find the least trace of any such objection, the least notice of it, or the most distant reference to it, by those

* Και τι θαυμαζεις ει ἑτεροι μειζονα περι αυτου ειρηκασιν ὧν αυτος ειρηκεν· ὁπου γε πολλα δια των πραγματων επιδεικνυμενος δια των ῥηματων σαφως ουκ ελεγεν; ὁτι γαρ τον ανθρωπον αυτος εποιησεν εδειξε σφαως και δια του τυφλου. ἡνικα δε περι της εν αρχῃ πλασεως ὁ λογος ην αυτῳ, ουκ ειπεν ὁτι εγω εποιησα, αλλ' ὁ ποιησας αρσεν και θηλυ εποιησεν αυτους. Παλιν, ὁτι τον κοσμον εδημιουργησε και τα εν αυτῳ, δια των ιχθυων, δια του οἰνου, δια των αρτων·—— ῥημασι ουδαμου τουτο σαφως ειπεν. In Matt. cap. v. Hom. 16. Opera, vol. vii. p. 154.

† Εδει γαρ τεως λανθανειν, και μαλιστα επι των μαθητων. και γαρ εκ πολλης ἡδονης παντα αν εκηρυξαν. In Matt. cap. viii. Hom. 28. Opera, vol. vii. p. 274.

‡ Ου γαρ ευθεως ἡμιν ἑαυτου την θεοτητα εξεκαλυψεν· αλλα πρωτον μεν ενομιζετο ειναι προφητης, και Χριστος, ἁπλως ανθρωπος, ὑστερον δε εφανη, δια τῶν εργων καὶ των ῥηματων, τουτο ὁπερ ην. In Johan. cap. i. Hom. 2. Opera, vol. viii. p. 20.

who were concerned to answer it? The most probable conclusion from this fact is, that no such offence had been given to the Jews, the apostles not having preached any such doctrine.

With respect to the time when our Saviour's disciples began to consider him as God, you say, p. 99, that I am the person most concerned to find the solution. I told you in my former letters that I had solved the difficulty to my own perfect satisfaction in my History of the Corruptions of Christianity; where I showed by what steps the idea of the divinity of Christ was introduced. I did it upon my own hypothesis, of its not being an original doctrine, but a corruption of christianity; and I challenged you to give as probable an account of its introduction, on the idea of its being no corruption, but a genuine doctrine, revealed at some time or other by Christ to the apostles, and by the apostles to the body of christians. But, according to you, it required no revelation at all. The whole Jewish nation were prepared to receive their Messiah as their God, and immediately to worship him accordingly.

I have no doubt, however, but that the Jews in our Saviour's time expected a man in the character of the Messiah. Mary, his mother, evidently expected that he would even be born in the usual way of two human parents; for when the angel informed her that she should *conceive and bring forth a son*, who should be called the *son of the highest*, to whom *God would give the throne of his father David*, she replied, Luke i. 34, *How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?* The apostles evidently appear to me to have considered him as no other than a man, and they taught no other doctrine after our Saviour's death.

We perceive no trace of it in the book of Acts; and Athanasius, Chrysostom, and others of the Fathers, only pretend that they taught it with *caution*, so as not to give much alarm, till John published it in his gospel.

Upon the whole, it appears, that the Jews who led the Gentiles into the belief of the doctrine of the simple humanity of Christ were, according to Athanasius, christian Jews, and that their proselytes were christian Gentiles. It is perfectly ridiculous to suppose that the question could be interesting to any others. It also must have been the certain knowledge of great bodies of unitarians, Jews and Gentiles, in the earliest times, that led these Fathers to this hypothesis, to account for the fact. But that the great body of Jewish christians should be unitarians in the time of the apostles, without their having learned that doctrine from the apostles, is a thing that I cannot conceive. Moreover, it does not appear that the apostles took any umbrage at the prevailing doctrine, but connived at it; and all the indignation they expressed against *any* opinions, was against those of the Judaizing teachers and the Gnostics.

If the apostles did themselves really believe the doctrine of the trinity, they must at least have had no high idea of its *importance*, or they could never have been such tame spectators of the spread of the unitarian doctrine among their countrymen, and from them, according to Athanasius, among the Gentiles. How would Bishop Bull and the Archdeacon of St. Alban's have written if they had been in the situation in which Epiphanius and all the Fathers place the apostle John when he wrote his epistle? Would they have contented them-

selves with condemning the dangerous tenet of the unitarians in no more than one clause of a single sentence, which likewise contains the condemnation of the Gnostics? Would they not have thought the unitarian the more dangerous heresy of the two; and therefore have bent their chief force against it?

It is remarkable, however, and really curious, that before the unitarians were considered as heretics, we find a very different account of the reasons that induced John to write both his epistles and his gospel; Ignatius says it was solely with a view to the Gnostics, and so does Irenæus, again and again. This, therefore, was the more ancient opinion on the subject; and I doubt not, the true one. And it was not till long after this (Tertullian, I believe, is the first in whom it occurs) that it was imagined that the apostle had any view to the unitarians in any of his writings. This is a circumstance that well deserves to be attended to.

You imagine, Sir, what appears very extraordinary indeed to me, that the Jews will be easily reconciled to the doctrine of the trinity, and will even more readily embrace christianity on the trinitarian than on the unitarian principle. "For the Jews," you say, p. 151, "whenever they begin to open their eyes to the evidences of our Saviour's mission, they will still be apt to consider the New Testament in connexion with the Old. They will look for an agreement in principle, at least, between the gospel and the law. When they accept the christian doctrine, it will be as a later and a fuller discovery. They will reject it if they consider it to be contradictory to the patriarchal and Mosaic revelations. Successive discoveries of divine truth may differ, they will say, in fullness and perspicuity, but in

principle they must harmonize, as parts of one system. They will retain some veneration for their traditional doctrines; and in their most ancient Targums, as well as in allusions in their sacred books, they will find the notion of one godhead in a trinity of persons, and they will perceive that it was in contradiction to the christians that the later Rabins abandoned the notions of their forefathers. The unitarian scheme of christianity is the last, therefore, to which the Jews are likely to be converted, as it is the most at enmity with their ancient faith."

So different, Sir, are your ideas and mine on this subject, that one would think we had never read the same authors, or lived in the same world. Our different views of things must have arisen from the different influences to which our minds have been exposed; but where you have been, or with whom you have lived, I cannot trace. Who those *later Rabins* were who abandoned the notion of their fathers, and from expecting the Messiah to be God adopted the idea of his being a mere man, (a process which I should think not very natural,) I cannot find. Late as they are they must have been earlier than Justin Martyr; and indeed of this memorable *change of opinion* on so fundamental a subject I find no trace whatever. Really, Sir, one cannot read such a shameful perversion and absolute *making* of ancient history, with respect to this doctrine concerning the Messiah, as well as to the church of Jerusalem, without a mixture of contempt and indignation.

I shall content myself on this subject with appealing to two testimonies. One of them is that of Basnage, and the other of later date.

Basnage, I suppose, you will allow, had sufficiently studied the history and opinions of the Jews. He has written largely on the subject; and yet, though a trinitarian himself, he has exploded all the pretences of Cudworth and others to find the doctrine of the trinity either among the ancient or the modern Jews.

"The christians and the Jews," he says, "separate at the second step in religion. For, after having adored together one God absolutely perfect, they find the moment after the abyss of the *trinity*, which entirely separates them. The Jew considers *three persons* as *three Gods*, and this *tritheism* shocks him. The christian, who believes the unity of one God, thinks that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit should all be called God, and have the same worship. It is impossible to reconcile opinions so contrary. There are, however, divines bold enough to attempt it*." You, Sir, are one of those *bold divines*, or, if not bold yourself, at least a follower of the bold.

This writer also says that the "Jews consider themselves as bearing their testimony to the unity of God among all the nations of the world†." Deny these facts if you can. What *ought* or what *ought not* to offend the Jews is not the question. The doctrine of

* "Les chretiens s'ecartent des Juifs des le second pas qu'ils font dans la religion. Car apres avoir adoré ensemble un Dieu, souverainement, parfait, ils trouvent un moment apres l'abime de la trinité, qui les separe, et les eloigne souverainement. Le Juif regarde trois personnes comme trois dieux, et ce tritheisme lui fait horreur. Le chretien, qui croit l'unité d'un Dieu, veut a meme tems qu'on donne ce titre au pere, au fils, au Saint Esprit, et qu'on les adore. Il est impossible de concilier des opinions si contraires; cependant il y a des theologiens hardis, qui ont tenté de le faire." Hist. des Juifs, lib. iv. cap. iii. s. 1.

† "Les temoins de l'unité de Dieu dans toutes les nations du monde." Ibid. lib. vii. cap. xxxiii. s. 15.

the trinity does in fact, and from the time that it was started always did, offend the whole body of the Jews, and is, no doubt, one of the greatest obstacles to their conversion.

My second testimony I shall give in the postscript of a letter from a correspondent in the West of England, in the year 1774, containing the opinion of a learned Jew, whom we may presume to be now living, and in this country. At that time he must have been in the neighbourhood of Barnstable in Devonshire. An event, which then gave me much concern, occasioned the discontinuance of my correspondence with the writer of that letter; and though desirous of knowing the issue of the business, I have not learned it. If this publication should be the means of bringing me acquainted with it, I shall think myself happy. If the learned Jew himself should meet with these letters, I shall be very glad to hear from him, whatever may be his present thoughts on the subject. In the mean time I would recommend it to you, Mr. Archdeacon, to enquire of any Jews now living, and not to argue from *suppositions* when *facts* are within your reach.

My correspondent's postscript is as follows: "I have lent your Institutes to a sensible and religious Rabbi, bred at the university of Halle. He has read them with great care, and taken curious extracts from them. The clergyman of this parish warned him of the danger of your works, and abused me for lending them to a Jew. The latter had sense enough to despise him, and told him, that as long as christianity was thought contradictory to the first law of Judaism, the conversion of his brethren would be impossible. The parson wanted to baptise him. The Rabbi said reli-

gion was a serious matter, and he would be a convert in reality before he would be one in profession. He has been much with me. I hope to be able to send you a pleasing account of him."

I am, &c.

LETTER XII.

Of the Personification of the Logos.

REV. SIR,

YOU still deny that the christian fathers were acquainted with any such thing as the *personification*, that is, *the making a real intelligent person* of the *logos*, or wisdom of God; whereas, absurd as I acknowledge the notion to be, it was most indisputably the real doctrine both of Philo, the platonizing Jew, and of those who were called *orthodox christians*, who platonized likewise. I speak within compass when I say that I can produce hundreds of passages which prove in the clearest manner that the divinity which they ascribed to Christ was the very same *principle* which had constituted the *wisdom* and other *powers* of God the Father; and that the *generation of the Son* was the commencement of the state of *actual personality* of the *logos*, whether in time, as some thought, or from all eternity, as others, which latter was afterwards received as the established doctrine.

This was evidently agreeable to the principles of those platonists, from whom Philo and those christian fathers derived their opinion; and if you deny this, *a child*, as you call me in platonism, p. 15, (which how-

ever does not, I hope, prevent me from being a man in christianity,) I shall be able, as you will see in my larger work, to teach you what you are at present ignorant of with respect to it. If this kind of literature be your *home*, p. 163, I must say that you have been a considerable time *from home*, and that you are at present unacquainted with several apartments in your own house. I shall then wait upon you at this house of yours, and endeavour to point them out to you.

With respect to my quotation from Athenagoras, and my account of his meaning, you are pleased to say, p. 124, "it only finishes the proof, if it was before defective, of your incompetency in the subject. It shows that you are so little acquainted with platonism, that your mind cannot readily apprehend a platonic notion, when it is clearly set before you. What you take for my mere conjecture, viz. that *the external display of power*, is the thing that is called *generation*, is the express assertion of Athenagoras, in the very passage which you have quoted."

On the contrary, I maintain that, if your *external display of power* be any thing different from what I have called *the personification of the logos*, or his becoming *a proper person*, so as to be God, in himself considered, it is contradicted by Athenagoras in this very passage, as well as by all the christian writers who treat of the subject. In this passage he calls the Son "the first production of the Father, not that he was ever properly made," (that is out of nothing) "for God being an eternal mind, had logos always in himself, being always λογικος;" that is, being always a reasonable intelligent being. Now, Sir, what could any man mean by this expression, but that before this cir-

cumstance, or event (which I call the *personification* of the logos, and you the *external display of his powers*) took place, there was no more a proper trinity of persons in God, than there is in man? for God, like man, was then simply λογικος, an intelligent being; wisdom, or intelligence, being one of his attributes. Many of the fathers use this comparison, supposing the *logos* in God to have been originally exactly similar to *logos*, or reason in man. Now are there, think you, or was it ever imagined that there were, proper distinct persons in the mind of man, merely because that mind was λογικος *rational?* The very expression excludes this idea, and must have been intended to exclude it.

But according to all the orthodox fathers, after this generation of the Son (who before was nothing more with respect to the Father than *reason* is with respect to man) he assumed a proper *distinct personality*; and this generation was with a view to the production of material beings, and not the production itself, or the *display of powers* in that production. For this generation was represented as the proper *act of the eternal Father*, whereas the *display of powers* in the production of material beings (if I must adopt your quaint language) was according to them, the proper *act of the Son*. According to them it certainly was the Son, and not the Father, who was the immediate maker of all things. In my opinion Athenagoras's notion was, that this generation of the Son took place *in time*, and not from all eternity; because he says that from the beginning, or from eternity, God was simply νους, *a mind*, having logos in himself, as being always λογικος, *reasonable*, or *intelligent*.

Athenagoras, however, as appears from this very

passage, the beginning of which I quoted, was very far from having a notion of *three* distinct persons in the trinity. For though he thought, with Justin Martyr, that the *logos*, from the time of his generation, assumed a *permanent personality*, the holy spirit did not, but was like *a beam of the sun*, sometimes emitted from the Father, and sometimes drawn into him again, agreeably to the philosophy of those times concerning the sun and his light. This was also the kind of personal existence that Justin Martyr said that some persons in his time ascribed to the Son, and which was also said to have been the doctrine of Marcellus of Ancyra.

You say, p. 123, that "Tertullian, to prevent the very conclusion which you draw from this analogy, that the logos was at some time or another a mere attribute, remarks that nothing empty or unsubstantial can proceed from God. For the divine nature admitting neither quality nor accident, every thing belonging to it must be substance." "This argument," you add, "is ably stated in the Dialogues of the learned Dr. Leslie."

This indeed, Sir, is an argument that requires both an *able stating*, and an *able defence*; for, in itself, nothing can be more weak. What, think you, could the fathers mean by saying that, after the emission of the logos, the original divine mind was not destitute of *logos?* Did they not mean that he was not destitute of *reason*, or *understanding?* Is there not then necessarily implied an identity of nature between the *logos emitted*, and *logos retained?* Does it not follow from hence, and from its being said that the Father was still λογικος, *rational*, that they were both originally what we call *reason?* Nay, do not some of the fathers compare the emission of the logos from God to the

emission of reason from man, in discoursing with one another?

You say, for it is *you* that say this (I have met with nothing so very absurd in Tertullian), that "the divine nature admitting neither quality nor accident, every thing belonging to it must be substance." The divine being then has no *properties*, no *attributes*, no *perfections* at all, which is, in fact, denying his very *being*; for what is *being* without *properties?* Pray, Sir, has the Son or the Holy Spirit, any attributes? In all my reading I do not remember to have met with any absurdity equal to this, except your own peculiar conceit, that "one mind can beget another by the contemplation of its perfections" (now called *substances*) a notion which you ascribe to *all the fathers*, though I will venture to say it is not to be found in any of them. Strange enough, to be sure, are some of their conceits, but not quite so strange and absurd as this. There is, as you somewhere justly observe, a progress in *absurdity*, as well as in *truth*.

Lactantius, you acknowledge, expresses himself clearly enough according to my idea of this subject, but you dispose of his *orthodoxy*, as you did of Origen's *veracity*. You boldly deny it. This, indeed, is a very compendious method of answering me. But, Sir, the question is not whom you are *now* pleased to call orthodox, but who was deemed to be so in the age in which he lived. Now I challenge you to prove that any writer of the age of Lactantius considered him as heterodox. Indeed it was very unlikely that the man who was chosen tutor to a son of Constantine, should have been a person of that class.

In order to undervalue this excellent writer, you say,

p. 129, that "he ascribed a beginning to the existence of the eternal Father. No wonder then," you add, "that he should ascribe a beginning to the Son's existence. You are welcome, Sir," you say, "to any advantage you may be able to derive from the authority of such a writer." Lactantius, however, candidly construed, may perhaps be said only to have used an improper expression, namely, that *God made himself*, meaning no more than we do when we say that God is *self-existent*, which in fact implies the very contrary of what you ascribe to him. He advances this in proof of his general maxim, Nec enim potest, ut ab ullo esse generatus, qui ipse universa generavit, *he cannot be created of any who himself created all things*, which clearly implies that he could not be created at all. For though the *thing made* had a beginning, the *maker* could have none; and who was the *maker* in this case but God himself? The term *self-existent* is in fact (as will appear if it be analysed) equally improper; for it implies that God is the *cause* of his own existence. For this reason, some who wish to speak with exactness avoid that term, and rather say that God is *eternal*; but they do not tax those who use the word *self-existent* with really believing that God had a beginning.

Whatever mistakes Lactantius may be supposed to have made as a *metaphysician*, it does not appear that in his own time he was charged with any; and they might have been as little noticed still if he had been a *sound divine*; and though you suppose that he ascribed a beginning to the eternal Father, yet, if you had found that from the moment of the Father's existence, that of the Son had, in his idea, commenced also, you

would perhaps have contented yourself with smiling at his notion, or at least have abated of the severity of your censure.

Constantine, whom you quote, p. 127, as in your favour, is directly against you. Taking your own words, he says, "the Son was begotten, or rather he himself came forth, (being even ever in the Father,) for the setting in order of the things which were made by him. Here," you say, "the emperor expounds *generation by coming forth.*" But then, Sir, he does not say that this *generation*, or *coming forth*, was the same thing with *the setting in order the things that were made by him*; but it was evidently something that took place previous to this *setting in order*, and with a view to it; so that this mysterious *generation* preceded what you quaintly call *the projection of energies*, and was not the same thing with it.

You still likewise confound the doctrine of Arius, p. 116, with that of the *personification of the Logos*, than which no two things were more different, having always been opposed to each other, as you must have known had you been so well read as you pretend to be in the ancient ecclesiastical writers, since a great proportion of their works is occupied in the discussion of this subject. The Arians maintained that Christ was a being *created out of nothing*, as other creatures were, notwithstanding the vastness of his powers, which were equal to the creation of all other things, visible and invisible; and not believing an eternal creation, they likewise said that there was a time when the Son did not exist. Both these propositions were denied by the orthodox of that age, who maintained that Christ was not made out of *nothing*, for that he was the *Lo-*

gos, the *wisdom*, the *power*, &c. of the Father, and that he had always existed in the Father, as reason does in man, though his *personality* was by some supposed to have commenced in time. You must give me leave to say you are but little acquainted with the principles even of platonism, and especially those of the later platonists, from whom the christian fathers more immediately derived their notions, if you are not able to enter into this idea.

This personification, or the commencement of an actual *personality* of what was an *attribute* of God, is a strange idea; but, strange as it is, it nevertheless actually took place in the minds of thousands, and was in truth all the orthodoxy of the earlier ages. This *incipient orthodoxy* grew immediately out of platonism, and is certainly absurd enough. The orthodoxy of the later ages and of the present grew out of that, and is infinitely more absurd. Their doctrine was mere *nonsense*, yours the plainest of all *contradictions*, as I shall clearly show in my next letter.

"What difference there may be," you say, p. 118, "between a making out of nothing, and the conversion of a mere attribute into a substance, or how a person made out of an attribute may differ from a person made out of nothing, I would rather, Sir, that you than I should take the trouble to explain." I have explained it as well as such an absurdity can be explained, but it behoves you to explain it much more than it does me; for, absurd as the notion is, it certainly prepared the way for the still more absurd notion of *three equal divine persons in one godhead.*

I am, &c.

LETTER XIII.

Considerations relating to the Doctrine of the Trinity.

REV. SIR,

I OWN I was particularly desirous of hearing what you could possibly say on the subject of my *seventh letter*, in which I advanced some general considerations relating to the doctrine of the *trinity*; but, unfortunately, you "content yourself," p. 136, "with giving only a general reply to some parts of that letter. A particular answer," you say, "to the several objections which it contains would lead me into metaphysical disquisitions, which I wish to decline, because in that subject I foresee that we should want common principles and a common language."

Now I make no doubt, Sir, but that if it had been *possible* for you to have given any plausible answer to the difficulties started in that letter, you would have found some principle, common or uncommon, on which to found it, and some language also, which might have been intelligible to me and your readers. But as you profess that you do not expect to convince *me*, it would have been quite sufficient for your purpose if you could have found common principles and common language for others.

I am the more concerned at your silence, as I was in hopes of having some further account of your own peculiar notion of *the necessary origin of the Son from the Father's contemplation of his own perfections*; but to my great mortification I find not one gleam of more light on this curious subject. You said that this

doctrine was agreeable to the notions of all the fathers, as well as to the sacred writers, and I challenged you to produce any authority for it, except what exists in your own imagination. In my opinion, nothing can be conceived more absurd than the idea of the necessary production of an intelligent being, possessed of actual substantial personality, equal in all respects to the original intelligent being, from the mere self-contemplation of that original being's perfections. I said that nothing in the Jewish Cabbala could be more absurd. You intimate, p. 149, that I may know but little of the Jewish Cabbala; but for my purpose it is quite enough, that it is a known proverbial expression to denote the *extreme of absurdity*; and if so, whatever the Jewish Cabbala may really be, (of which I may perhaps know as much as yourself, and of which we may each of us soon learn enough from Basnage,) the phrase could not be misapplied *.

I find, however, a few other things on the subject of that letter which are curious enough; so that, for the amusement, if not the instruction of my readers, I shall make some observations on them.

* *The learned Prelate, in the fourth Disquisition annexed to the edition of his Tracts in controversy with Dr. Priestley, has laboured much, not indeed to defend the mysterious doctrine of the Son's generation from the Father's contemplation of his own perfections, but to prove that he was not himself the inventor of the sublime mystery. In his appeal to the writings of the fathers the Bishop totally fails: nor does he succeed much better in those of the schoolmen. The first plain example of this curious doctrine is found in a treatise published under the sanction of the Council of Trent, entitled* "Catechismus ad Parochos," *in which* "*the true believer is exhorted to pray that he may be thought worthy to be allowed to see what that wonderful fecundity of God the Father is, that, contemplating and exerting his intelligence upon himself, he should beget a son, the exact counterpart and equal of himself.*" *Melanchthon appears to have entertained the same extravagant notion, and Zanchius reproves it. At any rate it is sufficiently apparent that the honour of the invention does not appertain to Bishop Horsley.*"—ED.

I.

In the first place, I still think that you yourself are not perfectly orthodox; for besides your virtual disapprobation of the *damnatory clause* in the Athanasian creed, p. 165, you allow a real *superiority* in the Father. "If," you say, p. 145, "from such expressions as *my Father is greater than I*, you would be content to infer that the Almighty Father is indeed the fountain and the center of divinity, and that the equality of godhead is to be understood with some mysterious subordination of the Son to the Father, you would have the concurrence of the ancient fathers, and of the advocates of the true faith in all ages." But give me leave to say, that any *proper subordination*, mysterious or not mysterious, implies *inferiority*, and is an infringement of the doctrine of the *perfect equality* of the three persons; so that it cannot be, as your creed says, *none is afore or after another*. You say, p. 149, "I maintain the equality of the three persons in all the attributes of the divine nature. I maintain their equality in rank and authority with respect to all created things, whatever relations or differences may subsist between themselves." But their equal superiority to all created beings is no proof at all of any proper equality among themselves. If so, all men would be equal among themselves, because all men are superior to brutes.

Your notion of a real subordination, which must imply *inferiority*, and indeed *imperfection*, in any of the persons in the trinity, is certainly not the orthodoxy that took place after the council of Nice, and that of the Athanasian creed.

II.

I now come to something still more extraordinary. "I maintain," you say, p. 148, "that the *three persons are one being*—I maintain that each person by himself is God; because each possesses fully every attribute of the divine nature." Then, Sir, I assert, that you maintain as palpable a *contradiction* as it is in the power of man to form an idea of. The term *being* may be predicated of every thing, and therefore of each of the three persons in the trinity. For to say that Christ, for instance, is God, but that there is no *being*, no *substance*, to which his attributes may be referred, were manifestly absurd; and therefore when you say, that "each of these persons is by himself God," you must mean, and in effect say, that the Father separately considered, has a *being*, that the Son likewise, separately considered, has his *being*, and likewise that the Holy Spirit, separately considered, has his *being*. Now, Sir, if you will be pleased to count them up, you will find that you have got *three beings* as well as *three persons*, and what can these three beings be but *three Gods*, without supposing that there are "three co-ordinate persons, or three Fathers, three Sons, or three Holy Ghosts." If you like an algebraic expression better than this, it will stand thus, $1+1+1=3$. Have the courage then, Sir, to speak out, and *say* what you must *mean*, if you have any meaning at all, that you worship *three Gods*.

But you say, p. 148, that "these three persons are all included in the very idea of a God, and that for that reason, as well as for the identity of the attributes in each, it were impious and absurd to say that there

are three Gods." If there be any foundation for this remark, it must be impossible for any man to have an idea of a God without having at the same time an idea of these three persons; and then either there cannot be any such thing as an unitarian, denying these three persons in the godhead, or else all unitarians are in fact *atheists*, having no idea of any God at all.

As you seem to have bewildered yourself very much upon the subject of *three persons and one God*, I shall enter a little further into the metaphysical analysis of it. By the words *being*, *substance*, *substratum*, &c. we can mean nothing more than the *foundation* as it were *of properties*, or some thing to which, in our idea, we refer all the particular attributes of whatever exists. In fact, they are terms that may be predicated of every thing that is the subject of thought or discourse, all the discrimination of things depending upon their *peculiar properties*. So that whenever the properties differ, we say that there is a corresponding difference in the *things*, *beings*, or *substances* themselves. Consequently, if the Father, Son, and Spirit differ in any respect, so as to have *different properties*, either in relation to themselves or to other beings, we must, according to the analogy of all language, say that they are *three different beings* or *substances*.

Supposing again, that there is what you call an *identity of attributes* in each of them, so that, being considered one after the other, no difference could be perceived even in idea, as may be supposed to be the case of *three men*, who should perfectly resemble one another in all external and internal properties; and supposing, moreover, that there should be a perfect coincidence in all their thoughts and actions; though there

might be a perfect *harmony* among them, and this might be called *unity*, they would still be *numerically three.* Consequently, though the Father, Son, and Spirit had no real differences, but as you say, p. 145, they had "the most perfect identity of nature, the most entire unity of will, and consent of intellect, and an incessant co-operation in the exertion of common powers, to a common purpose," yet would they, according to the analogy of language, not be *one God*, but *three Gods*; or, which is the same thing, they would be *three beings*, with equal divine natures, just as the *three men* would be three beings with equal human natures.

Had you never heard of the *Parmenides*, I should have had some hopes of your understanding these *modern metaphysics.* But though I suppose I have left you far behind (perhaps gone to look into Plato, to see what he says on the subject) I shall proceed without you, and give the modern reader my opinion with respect to the proper and only intelligible use of the word *person.*

The term *being*, as I have observed, may be predicated of every thing, without distinction; but the term *person* is limited to *intelligent beings.* Three men, therefore, are not only three beings, but likewise three persons; the former is the *genus*, and the latter the *species.* But a *person* is not less a *being* on this account; for each *man* may be said to be a *being*, as well as a *person.* Consequently, though the word *person* be properly applied to each of the three component parts of your trinity, yet as *person* is a species, comprehended under the genus *being*, they must be *three beings*, as well as *three persons.*

While you, Sir, are either absent, or wondering at

these *novelties*, I proceed to observe, that the term *God* is a subdivision under the term *person*; because we define *God*, to be *an intelligent being possessed of all possible perfections*. Consequently, if the Father, Son, and Spirit, be each of them possessed of all possible perfections, which you do not deny, they are each of them *a person*, each of them *a being*, and each of them *a God*; and what is this but making *three Gods?* Avoid this conclusion from these principles, or assume other principles more just and natural, if you can.

These, Sir, if you be within hearing at all, are such metaphysics as you might have learned from Mr. Locke if you had not been, unfortunately for yourself and your flock, poring so long over the Parmenides. You will probably object to my definition of the word *person*, as applied to the doctrine of the trinity; but if you give any other definition, I will venture to assert, that you might as well say, that the Father, Son, and Spirit, are three *Abracadabra's* as *three persons*. They will be equally words without meaning.

Athanasius, and many of the ancient fathers, after the council of Nice, became absolute tritheists on this principle, believing that the Father, Son, and Spirit, are no otherwise *one*, than as three particular men may be considered as one. Athanasius, considering this very difficulty, says, "since the Father is called God, the Son God, and the Holy Spirit God, how is it that there are not three Gods?" he answers, "because where there is a common nature, the name of the dignity is likewise common*." And he illustrates this, by God's

* Και πως φησι δυναται λεγεσθαι ὁ πατηρ θεος, και ὁ υιος θεος, και το πνευμα το ἁγιον θεος, και ου τρεις εισι θεοι; ὁπου κοινα τα της φυσεως, κοινον και ονομα της αξιας. De Communi Essentia, Opera, vol. i. p. 213.

calling the whole human race by the name of *man*, in the singular number, and by Moses's speaking of the *horse* and the *horseman* being drowned in the Red Sea, when in fact, great numbers of each sort were intended. "If this," says he, "be the case with respect to men, who differ so much as they do from each other, so that all men may be called *one man*, much more may we call the trinity one God, when their dignity is undivided, they have one kingdom, one power, will, and energy, which distinguishes the trinity from created things*."

I am far from saying that Athanasius is consistent with himself in this account of the unity of the three persons in the trinity; for he elsewhere says that there is *one God*, because there is *one unbegotten Father*, the sole fountain of deity, &c. but this representation occurs in many of the fathers, and in my larger history I shall show to what a variety of other miserable subterfuges the orthodox were driven to maintain the unity of their trinity.

In the dialogue against the Macedonians, written after the age of Athanasius, the orthodox speaker is represented as saying, "as Paul, Peter, and Timothy, are of one nature, and three hypostases; so I say, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, are three hypostases, and one nature†."

You say, p. 5, "The opinion of three persons in the godhead, unrelated to each other, and distinct in all respects, is rank tritheism; because what are un-

* Δια το κοινον της φυσεως πασα ἡ οικουμενη εις ανθρωπος εκληθη. ὅπου δε αμεριστος ἡ αξια, μια βασιλεια, μια δυναμις, και βουλη και ενεργεια, ιδιαζουσα την τριαδα απο της κτισεως, ἑνα λεγω θεον. De Communi Essentia, Opera, vol. i. p. 214.

† Ὡσπερ Παυλος, και Πετρος, και Τιμοθεος, φυσεως μιας εισι και τρεις ὑποστασεις, οὑτως Πατερα, και Ὑιον, και Ἁγιον Πνευμα, τρεις ὑποστασεις λεγω, και μιαν φυσιν. Opera, vol. ii. p. 269.

related, and distinct in all respects, are many in all respects; and being many in all respects, cannot in any respect be one." But no *relation*, let it be ever so intimate, can remove their *numerical difference*. Let three men be *connected* in any manner that you can imagine, they can only be *one*, as partaking of the *same nature*, and therefore, though they resemble one another ever so much, they can only be said to be *similar* in all respects; but still they will be numerically *three*. In like manner, suppose any relations you please, known or unknown, between the three persons to whom the title of *God* equally belongs, they will no more make *one God*, than three related men can make one man, but must be numerically *three Gods*. Councils and Synods, kings and houses of parliament, may decree that *three are one*, and archdeacons may defend the doctrine, but miracles cannot prove it. As you and your friends say with respect to some late proceedings in the Royal Society, "*Two and two* ever will be *four*, and the three angles of a triangle will be equal to two right angles."

But I find it is in vain to appeal to reason, or even to the scriptures. Your doctrine of the trinity was not derived from reason or the scriptures, but from Plato. "I then set myself," you say, p. 168, "to consider whether I knew enough of the divine *unity* to pronounce the *trinity* an *infringement* of it. Upon this point the platonists, whose acquaintance I now began to cultivate, soon brought me to a right mind."

They did the same good office for Austin before you, and I fear they are still doing the same for others, notwithstanding the cautions given us in the scriptures against the mixture of vain and absurd philosophy with christianity. You kindly advise me to take the same

course. "If," you say, p. 142, "you imagine that the absolute unity of the divine substance is more easily to be explained than the trinity, let me entreat you, Sir, to read the Parmenides. It is indeed in Plato's school, if anywhere, that a man's eyes are likely to be opened to his own ignorance." But, Sir, what must they do who cannot read the Parmenides? I suppose they must go without the doctrine of the trinity, and like the lower order of christians in the time of Origen, be content with the *corporeal gospel*, the plain doctrine of *Jesus Christ, and him crucified.* But with this the apostle Paul was contented, and so am I.

I have, however, read the *Parmenides*; and though I expect you will exult over me as usual, calling me, p. 15, *a child in platonism*, and say, that "*I cannot apprehend a platonic notion when it is clearly set before me*," p. 124, I have no scruple to declare, that I was not able to get one ray of good sense from the whole of it; I should even think the extracting of sun-beams from cucumbers the more hopeful project of the two. And so far am I from advising the reading of it for any useful purpose, that I should rather say, if a man perceives any incipient cloudiness in his head, and wishes to have the little understanding that he has left utterly confounded, let him read the Parmenides*. I shall say the same with respect to almost all the metaphysics of the ancients; and it is very possible that I may have given as much attention to these

* Among other *mysteries*, as Mr. Sydenham calls them, of the Parmenides, Plato, after showing that *littleness* cannot belong either to the *whole* or the *part* of any thing, concludes, that "nothing is *little* but *littleness itself*," ουδε τι εστι σμικρον πλην αυτης της σμικροτητος. It would be no bad parody on this to say, Nothing is nonsensical but nonsense itself; and this nonsense (if it can exist in the abstract) is in the Parmenides.

things as you have done, though I have not been so ostentatious of it. Any person since the time of Mr. Locke may say this of all the ancients without much arrogance. So far, however, I agree with you, that the study of the Parmenides may do very well by way of preparation for that of the doctrine of the trinity*.

III.

Perhaps the most extraordinary part of your whole performance is what you say of the *mysteriousness of the doctrine of the divine unity*, and of the unitarians having nothing to plead for themselves but single texts of scripture, interpreted in a figurative manner. "If the word" (spoken of by John) you say, p. 138, "be the divine attribute *wisdom*, then that attribute, in the degree which was equal to the formation of the universe, in this view of the scripture doctrine, was conveyed entire into the mind of a mere man, the son of a Jewish carpenter. A much greater difficulty, in my apprehension, than any that is to be found in the catholic faith."

In reading this and other passages in your Letters, I cannot help admiring your talent of lessening the difficulties of your own scheme, and magnifying those of others. If you use the same telescope, you certainly turn different ends to different objects.

Pray, Sir, what Socinian ever maintained that "the divine attribute wisdom, in the degree which was equal

* If *Plato's school* has this talismanic power of *opening a man's eyes to his own ignorance*, I would advise Dr. Horsley to continue in it a while longer; for this is a branch of science in which he has yet something to learn. Nor will it be amiss if he take his *good and able ally* along with him; though, as it will lessen his presumption, it may hurt him as a *Reviewer*, which, no doubt, ought to be considered.

to the formation of the universe, was conveyed entire into the mind of Jesus Christ?" What we believe, and all that is required by our interpretation of the *logos* (as meaning the divine attribute *wisdom*) is, that a *portion* only of the same wisdom that formed the universe was communicated to Christ, a portion sufficient to enable him to do what he actually did, and to say what he actually said. The Socinians do not believe that Christ made the universe, or that he was any way instrumental in making it.

For my own part, I never before heard of or suspected any difficulty in God's making man the instrument by which to do what man alone could not do. Did not God suggest to Moses what he could not have delivered of himself? In many of the miracles which attended the release of the Israelites from Egyptian bondage, and their passage through the wilderness, Moses was the immediate or ostensible agent, but the *power* was of God; and yet this was no proper infusing of the divine power into Moses. The power was still the incommunicable attribute of the Divine Being. Accordingly, Jesus says, that it was not *himself*, but the *Father within him*, or acting by him, that did the works; and that the *words which he spake were not his own*. Moreover, he says of the apostles, that they should do greater things than he himself had done. From this, then, you ought to conclude, that the divine attributes of wisdom and power were conveyed entire into the minds of the apostles, or even that they were Gods superior to Christ. Such reasoning as this I have hardly patience to refute. But surely you cannot be serious in saying that this difficulty in the Socinian scheme is equal to that of *three*

persons in one God in the Athanasian trinity, or to that in your own account of the Platonic trinity.

But perhaps the most extraordinary part of your whole work will be thought to be the following: In answer to my saying that "many passages in scripture inculcate the doctrine of the divine unity in the clearest and strongest manner," you say, p. 141, "Be pleased, Sir, to produce one of the many;" meaning evidently, that there is no such passage; and p. 17, you add, "the unitarians themselves *pretend* not that their doctrine is to be found in the plain literal sense of holy writ. On the contrary, they take the greatest pains to explain away the literal meaning."

Now, Sir, if you had really read any unitarian treatise at all, you must have known that this representation is the reverse of the fact. We unitarians certainly *pretend* at least, whether we be able to prove it or not, that the *general tenor, and plain literal sense of scripture* is in our favour; that they are only *particular texts*, and those ill-understood, that you avail yourselves of; and we say that there is no difficulty in interpreting even those texts in perfect consistency with the unitarian doctrine, if the true idiom of the language be considered.

You complain of my not *reading*, but only *looking through* authors. But surely you cannot have even *looked through* the very Letters of mine that you are professedly replying to. Let me therefore bring again before your view a paragraph or two in those letters, which, as far as *pretensions* go, directly contradict your confident assertion. See p. 90, where you will find as follows: "I will venture to say, that for one text in which you can pretend to find any thing harsh or dif-

ficult to me, I will engage to produce ten that shall create more difficulty to you. How strangely must you torture the plainest language, and in which there is not a shadow of figure to interpret to your purpose, 1 Tim. ii. 5, *There is one God, and one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus;* 1 Cor. viii. 6, *To us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him, and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him;* or that expression of our Saviour himself, John xvii. 2, *That they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.* Never upbraid us unitarians with torturing the scriptures, while you have these and a hundred other plain texts to strain at, and to bend to your Athanasian hypothesis; besides many *general arguments*, from reason and the scriptures, of more real force than any particular texts, to answer."

This, Sir, was certainly answering your challenge to produce *one plain text* in favour of the unitarian doctrine before it was thrown out. I appeal to yourself for the obvious sense of the passages I have now recited; and you say, p. 23, "It is a principle with me, that the true sense of any phrase in the New Testament is what may be called its standing sense, that which will be the first to occur to common people of every country and in every age*."

I would also refer you to a small piece I lately published, entitled A general View of the Arguments for

* It is remarkable that the orthodox, even after the council of Nice, complained of the advantage which the unitarians had in appealing to the literal sense of the scriptures. "If," says Gregory Nyssen, "a man rests in the bare letter, so far he judaizes in opinion, and has not learned that a christian is not the disciple of the letter, but of the spirit; for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth

the Unity of God, and against the Divinity and Pre-existence of Christ, from Reason, from the Scriptures, and from History, which you seem to have seen, as you refer to my *twopenny pamphlets*, for this is sold for two-pence. There you will find, not only that Socinians pretend to have the clear sense of scripture in their favour, but many of those passages, expressive of that clear sense, produced. I there observe, p. 10, that "the scriptures contain the clearest and the most express declarations that there is but *one God*, without ever mentioning any exception in favour of a trinity, or guarding us against being led into any mistake by such general and unlimited expressions." And if this language, as you suppose, always respected the multiplicity of gods among the heathens, why is this one God in the New Testament always called the *Father*, and even *the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ?* and why are we no where told that this one God is the *trinity*, consisting of *the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost?* This, Sir, is the language of your litany only. The Bible used in our conventicles contains no such barbarous jargon.

I would also recommend to your perusal another pamphlet of mine, called An Appeal to the serious and candid Professors of Christianity, of which more than

life." Θυκουν, ει ψιλῳ παραμενει τῳ γραμματι, και κατα τουτο το μερος Ιουδαιζει τῃ γνωμῃ, και ουπω πεπαιδευται ὁτι ουχι γραμματος εστι Χριστιανος μαθητης, αλλα πνευματος. το γαρ γραμμα, φησιν, απεκτεινει, το δε πνευμα ζωοποιει. Contra Eunomium Oratio xvi. Opera, vol. ii. p. 341.

It is to be observed, that by *judaizing* was meant adopting the doctrine of *the simple humanity of Christ*. For the ancient unitarians were commonly compared by the orthodox to *Jews*, and the *Arians* to *Gentiles*, as worshippers of *two Gods*, the Arian logos not being of the same substance with the Father; and therefore a maker of the world, or a God, quite distinct from him.

ten thousand have been sold for a penny each; and of this I have lately published a new edition, and have annexed to it the remarkable Trial of Mr. Elwall, of Wolverhampton, in this neighbourhood, for his publications in defence of the Socinian doctrine. These small publications of mine have, I trust, done much good, though you will call it much mischief, in this country; and I rejoice in perceiving the increase of this good or this mischief every day; and I have no doubt of the successful spread of religious truth by means of these publications, notwithstanding all you can do to counteract them, as you boast, by means of the Monthly Review.

IV.

In one thing I am glad to find that you and I entertain the same opinion, which is, that there is no medium between admitting the simple humanity of Christ, and that he is properly God. "Having once admitted," you say, p. 162, "his pre-existence in an exalted state, I saw the necessity of placing him at the head of the creation. Being thus convinced that our Lord Jesus Christ is indeed the maker of all things, I found that I could not rest satisfied with the notion of *a maker of the universe, not God.* I saw that all the extravagancies of the Gnostics hung upon that one principle, and I could have little opinion of the truth of a principle which seemed so big with mischief."

You also observe, very justly, p. 137, "Can any power or wisdom less than the supreme be a sufficient ground for the trust we are required to place in providence? Make the wisdom and the power of our ruler what you please, still, upon the Arian principle, it is

the wisdom and the power of a creature. Where then will be the certainty that the evil which we find in the world has not crept in through some imperfection in the original contrivance, or in the present management; since every intellect below the first may be liable to error, and any power short of the supreme may be inadequate to purposes of a certain magnitude? But if evil may have crept in thus, what assurance can we have that it will ever be extirpated?"

But if there be no proper medium between the Athanasian and the Socinian scheme, which I readily admit, I also maintain that there is no medium at all between the Socinian doctrine and an absolute contradiction, for such Athanasianism is; so that there is no resource but in the Socinian doctrine, oppose it as much as you will. I am, &c.

LETTER XIV.

Of Prayer to Christ.

Rev. Sir,

Having got *three persons*, all of them possessed of all divine perfections, all of them having intercourse with mankind, and consequently all of them naturally *objects of prayer*, I do not wonder that you appear to be a little embarrassed in your ideas of what is proper to be done with respect to each of them, individually considered. "That the Father," you say, p. 103, "is *a* proper object of prayer, God forbid that I should ever not acknowledge. That he is *the* proper object, in the sense in which you seem to make the assertion,

in prejudice and exclusion of the other persons, God forbid that I should ever concede. I deny not that there is an honour personally due to him as the Father. There is also an honour personally due to the Son, as the Son, and to the Spirit as the Spirit, but our knowledge of the personal distinctions is so obscure, in comparison of our apprehension of the general attributes of the godhead, that it should seem that *the divinity* (the το θειον) is rather to be generally worshipped in the three persons jointly, and indifferently, than that any distinct honours are to be offered to each separately. Prayer, however, for succour against external persecution, seems addressed with particular propriety to the Son."

Now, Sir, as this is a thing that relates to *practice*, I should have imagined that, if each of the three persons had been to be addressed separately, we should have been distinctly informed concerning the circumstances in which we were to pray to one of them, and not to the others; considering how difficult it must be, from the nature of the thing, for mere men to distinguish the separate rights of *three divine persons*. That you yourself have made some mistake in this business, will not, I think, be difficult to show. In order to this, let us consider how your *supposition* or *theory*, corresponds to the *fact*. For if it be not supported by corresponding facts, how ingenious or probable soever it may seem to be, *a priori*, it must fall to the ground. You will agree with me, I imagine, that the apostles and primitive christians knew whether the Father or the Son was the more proper object of prayer in the time of persecution. Let us see then both

what *directions* they gave, and also what they themselves actually *did* in this case.

The apostle James, writing to christians in a state of persecution, says, ch. i. 2. &c. *My brethren count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations*, or trials, &c. *If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God.* You will hardly say that in this he advises them to apply to *Christ*, or to *the trinity*, for direction in these circumstances. If you do, I will venture to assert, that your hypothesis has no countenance either in the scriptures, or in any christian writer before the council of Nice. For they all understood *the Father alone* to be intended whenever mention is made of *God* absolutely.

Peter, writing to christians in the same situation, says, 1 Pet. iv. 19, *wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful creator.* This is certainly meant of God the Father; but more evidently must we so interpret, 1 Pet. v. 10, *The God of all grace, who has called us into his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, establish, strengthen, settle you.* I do not find here, or any where else in the scriptures, any direction to pray to Christ in time of persecution, or indeed, in any other circumstances.

Let us now attend to some particulars in the *history* of the apostles. When Herod had put to death James, the brother of John, and imprisoned Peter, we read, Acts xii. 5, that *prayer was made without ceasing of the church to God*, not to Christ, *for him.* When Paul and Silas were in prison at Philippi, we read, Acts xvi.

25, that *they sung praises to God*, not to Christ. And when Paul was warned of what would befal him if he went to Jerusalem, Acts xxi. 14, he said, *the will of the Lord be done.* This, you must suppose, was meant of *God the Father*, because Christ himself used the same language in this sense, when, in praying to the Father, he said, *Not my will but thine be done.*

These, you may perhaps say, are only *incidental circumstances*, on which no great stress is to be laid. But in Acts vi. 24. &c. we have a prayer of some length addressed to God the Father, at the very beginning of the persecution of christians, when Peter and John had been examined before the high priest, and his court, and had been threatened by them. As I suspect that you may not have given much attention to the tenor of it, I shall recite the whole, which is as follows: "And when they heard that, they lifted up their voice to God, with one accord, and said, Lord, thou art God, who hast made heaven and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is; who by the mouth of thy servant David, hast said, *Why did the heathen rage and the people imagine vain things? The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together, against the Lord, and against his Christ.* For of a truth against thy holy child" (or servant) "Jesus whom thou hast anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, for to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done. And now, Lord, behold their threatenings, and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word, by stretching forth thy hand to heal; and that signs and wonders

may be done by the name of thy holy child" (or servant) "Jesus."

We have now examined some particulars both of the *instructions*, and the *examples* of scripture, with regard to the proper object of prayer in time of persecution; from which it appears, that, even in this case, we have no authority to pray to any other than that one God, to whom Christ himself prayed in his affliction; and if we be not authorized to pray to Christ in time of persecution, there is, by your own acknowledgement, less propriety in praying to him on any other occasion.

As you profess a great regard for those who are called *apostolical fathers*, let us attend to the prayer of Polycarp when he was tied to the stake, ready to be burned alive. Now this prayer, which is a pretty remarkable one, is addressed to God the Father and not to Christ; so that this disciple of the apostle John did not think the example of Stephen any precedent for him. The prayer begins as follows: "O Lord, God Almighty, the Father of thy well-beloved and blessed Son Jesus Christ, by whom we have received the knowledge of thee, the God of angels and powers, and of every creature, and especially of the whole race of just men," &c.

You see then, Sir, how greatly you have been misled by your *speculative theology*, by your attention to particular texts, single incidents, and imaginary *proprieties*, without attending to the general tenor of scripture, the plain directions that are there given for our conduct, and the constant practice of the apostles, which supply the best interpretation of their doctrine. To conclude, as you have done from the single case of

Stephen, that all christians are authorized to pray to Christ, is like concluding that all matter has a tendency to go upwards, because a needle will do so when a magnet is held over it. When you shall be in the same circumstances with Stephen, having your mind strongly impressed with a vision of Christ sitting at the right-hand of God, you may then, perhaps, be authorized to address yourself to him as he did; but the whole tenor of the scriptures proves that, otherwise, you have no authority at all for any such practice.

I am, &c.

LETTER XV.

Of the Unitarian Principles with respect to Mahometanism and Infidelity.

REV. SIR,

WE are not, I hope, to judge of your acquaintance with the opinions of the ancients (which we have dignified with the name of *learning*) by the correctness with which you state the opinions of the moderns, even those which you undertake to controvert, and therefore ought to have studied. Here, Sir, you certainly have no choice but of the grossest *ignorance*, and consequently *presumption*, or the most perverse and wilful of all misrepresentations. Your ignorance of the state of the dissenters, of which a sufficient specimen has been given, shows that you are far from being *at home* even in your own country; but the account you give in your sixteenth letter, of the prin-

ciples of the unitarians, and the relation they bear to those of unbelievers, is such as can hardly be accounted for from mere ignorance. I fear it has a worse origin. I hope I shall not be thought uncandid; but I cannot put any favourable construction upon your insinuations on this subject.

You say, p. 151, "the whole difference between you and them" (that is, between the unitarians and Mahometans) "seems very inconsiderable. The true mussulman believes as much, or rather more, of Christ than the unitarian requires to be believed; and though the unitarians have not yet recognized the divine mission of Mahomet, there is good ground to think they will not long stand out. In unitarian writings of the last century, it is allowed of Mahomet that he had no other design than to restore the belief of the unity of God.——Of his religion, that it was not meant for a new religion, but for a restitution of the true intent of the christian.——Of the great prevalence of the Mahometan religion, that it has been owing not to force and the sword, but to that one truth contained in the Alcoran, the unity of God. With these friendly dispositions towards each other, it should seem that the Mahometan and unitarian might easily be brought to agree."

Now all these propositions which you have laid down as *certain facts*, are so highly improbable in themselves, that few persons, perhaps, will believe that you can be serious in advancing them; and I shall think myself at liberty to treat them as groundless calumnies till you shall produce some authority or evidence for them. For the state of things, as they now are, and which ought to be known to you, gives not

the least colour of plausibility to them. If the difference between the unitarians and the Mahometans be so inconsiderable, that there is good ground to think that the unitarians will soon acknowledge the divine mission of Mahomet, how has it happened that none of them have yet done it, and actually turned mussulmans? I think it is possible that, notwithstanding the extensive reading of which you give us so many intimations, I may be as well acquainted with the unitarian writers of the last age as you can pretend to be; and I have never met with any such passage as you mention; and I think if you could have produced any such in support of your assertions, you would not have failed to do it.

You may at any time see what I have said of the Mahometan religion on several occasions, and also what other unitarians of the present age have advanced concerning it. Do you find in my publications or theirs any thing favourable to the pretensions of Mahomet? And if the tendency of the unitarian principles be to approximate towards those of the Mahometans, it might be expected that they would have been nearer to each other now than they were in the last century. I shall therefore, unless authorities are produced, consider what you have said on this subject as another specimen of your *invention* of *facts*, and of your unparalleled effrontery in publishing them, in order to throw an odium upon the unitarians. You might indeed almost as well assert that all the unitarians in England are already so far Mahometans, that, to your certain knowledge, they are actually circumcised. What respect, Sir, can be due to the man who has not scrupled to have recourse to these calumnies, for

they cannot be called by any softer name, in order to blacken his adversaries? And what can we think of the *cause* that requires to be thus supported?

Your curious account of "the negotiation regularly opened," p. 152, "on the part of the English unitarians in the reign of Charles the Second, with the ambassador of the Emperor of Morocco," for which you quote Dr. Leslie, was probably an invention of his, similar to those of yours in these Letters, and calculated to answer a similar purpose. As it is a *stale business*, it may be sufficient to give a *stale answer* to it; and therefore, without examining into the history of what passed in the reign of Charles the Second, I shall content myself with copying what Mr. Emlyn said in answer to it, which is as follows:

"As to your rarity of the address to the Morocco ambassador, I see not what it amounts to more than a complaint of the corruption of the christian faith in the article of one God, which the Mahometans have kept by consent of all sides. Yet, for as much as I can learn nothing from any unitarians of any such address from them, nor do you produce any subscribers names, I conclude no such address was ever made by any deputed from them, whatever any single person might do. I suppose you conclude from the *matter* of it that it must be from some unitarian, and perhaps so; yet you may remember that so you concluded from the matter of Dr. Tillotson's sermons, that they were a Socinian's." Emlyn's Works, vol. ii. p. 93.

After being represented as having made near approaches to Mahometanism, I cannot be surprised that you should seem to insinuate that I am an unbeliever in christianity. For certainly I can be no less, if what

you say, p. 106, be true. "With your notion of inspiration, you are at liberty to dispute what the inspired apostles taught." Here is no exception made with respect to any thing that they taught, and even what they taught from inspiration. I do not personally require any acknowledgement for these gross misrepresentations, but the Public, whom you have imposed upon, have a right to demand it of you.

Your endeavour to show the little value of christianity on the unitarian principles, besides showing your disposition to calumniate, discovers equal ignorance both of the state of the world, and of the system of revelation. You talk, p. 154, of sober deists, who, rejecting revelation, acknowledge, however, the obligations of morality, believe a providence and a future retribution. The whole difference between them and us," you make them say, "is that we believe the same things upon different evidence, you upon the testimony of a man who you say was raised up to preach these truths; we upon the evidence of reason, which we think a higher evidence than any human testimony, &c.

I wish, Sir, you would produce a few of these *sober deists.* I think I am acquainted with as many unbelievers as you are; but whatever may have been the case formerly, I know no such persons at present as you describe; *i. e.* unbelievers who have a serious expectation of a future life. We may see from fact that the arguments from reason alone are unable to make any lasting impression on the minds of those who can resist the much plainer evidences of christianity; which, being of the historical kind, are much better adapted to carry conviction to the mind.

The present state of things furnishes an abundant

proof that it is by the gospel alone that life and immortality are fully brought to light. This gives the most satisfactory of all evidence of a future life, such as we see can really influence the heart and the life; such as can controul the strongest passions of the human breast, and give men a manifest superiority of mind to the world, and all the pleasures and pains of it.

To imagine, as you do, that the arguments for a future life from *reason alone*, that is, from appearances in the common course of nature, are at all comparable to the evidence that results from the gospel history, and especially from the death and resurrection of Christ, (a man like ourselves, and therefore the most proper pattern of a future universal resurrection,) discovers such a want of real discernment and judgement, and such ignorance of human nature, as I will venture to say are no where more conspicuous than in these letters of yours.

Your representation of the doctrine of *materialism* as favourable to *atheism*, only shows your ignorance of the system that you wish to expose, as indeed what you dropped on the subject of *ideas*, p. 113, sufficiently showed before. But upon this I have said so much (more I suppose than you will ever take the trouble to read) in my Letters to a Philosophical Unbeliever, that I shall not reply to such trite and idle reasoning as yours here.

What you say on the subject of the *resurrection*, if it has any weight at all, affects the christian doctrine, as taught by St. Paul. "The hope which you hold out," you say, p. 156, "of a resurrection, he" (the unbeliever) "will tell you is no hope at all, even admitting that the evidence of the thing could, upon

your principles, be indisputable. The atoms which compose *me*, your atheist will say, may indeed have composed a man before, and may again; but *me* they will never more compose when once the present *me* is dissipated. I have no recollection of a former, and no concern about a future self."

This might have been copied from the writings of the heathen philosophers against christianity. For if, as I have already intimated, there be any force in the objection, it will operate against the doctrine of a resurrection universally considered. Because, if the thing that dies (and it is the body only that is ever said to die) do not rise and come to life again, there is no proper resurrection at all.

Whatever hope of a future life you may build on the Platonic doctrine of a *soul*, it is I will venture to say universally abandoned by the philosophical unbelievers of the present age; and therefore, with respect to them, you can never establish any hope of a future life at all on any other principles than those *purely christian ones* which you endeavour to expose; and whatever difficulties may attend the consideration of it, they will all vanish, even to the philosophical mind, before the certain promise of that great being who made us and all things. If we once believe that *he* has given us this assurance, we can never suppose that he will be at a loss for proper means to accomplish his end; and if the gospel history be true, we have this assurance. But from natural appearances we have no evidence whatever of any thing belonging to man that can subsist, feel, and act when the body is in the grave. And what I maintain is, that we must depart from all the

known rules of philosophizing before we can conclude that any such thing belongs to man.

From the same mode of reasoning by which we can prove that there is an immaterial principle in *man*, we may also prove that there is such a principle not only in a *brute* or a *plant*, but even in a *magnet*, and the most inanimate parts of nature. For even the most inanimate parts of nature are possessed of *powers* or *properties*, between which and what we see and feel of them, we are not able to perceive any connexion whatever. There is just as much connexion between the principles of *sensation* and *thought* and the brain of a man, as between the powers of a magnet and the iron of which it is made, or between the principle of gravitation and the matter of which the earth and the sun are made; and whenever you shall be able to deduce the powers of a magnet from the other properties of iron, you may perhaps be able to deduce the powers of sensation and thought from the other properties of the brain. But to you, Sir, the whole of this subject is absolutely *terra incognita*. I perceive no traces of your being much *at home*, as you pretend, in the Greek language, but here you are a perfect stranger.

You are pleased to supply unbelievers with objecjections to revelation on the views that I have given of it; but I can produce numbers who will tell you, that such christianity as yours, including the belief of three persons in one God, is a thing absolutely incapable of proof, and who have actually rejected it on account of this doctrine, which they consider as so palpable an *absurdity* and *contradiction*, as not even miracles can make credible. I am, &c.

LETTER XVI.

Of Bishop Bull's Defence of Damnatory Clauses.

REV. SIR,

IN this Letter I shall exhibit a curious specimen of your peculiar mode of controversial writing, and the advantage you take of the most trifling oversights in your opponents.

You gave the highest encomiums to the works of Bishop Bull, without any qualification or distinction, and recommended them to your clergy, as an infallible guide in every thing relating to the subject of our controversy. On this I said, "As you recommend the writings of Bishop Bull without exception, I presume that you approve of his defence of the damnatory clause in the Athanasian creed. Indeed you mentioned it among his most valuable works." When I wrote this, I did not, to be sure, look into the title-page of the book, in order to copy the very words of it; but no person could have any doubt which of Bishop Bull's treatises I really meant, as what I said sufficiently characterized it. And though he does not mention the Athanasian creed in particular, he defends every thing that is harsh and severe in the treatment of unitarians by the orthodox in the primitive times, and particularly the anathema annexed to the Nicene creed.

On this subject, however, you write as follows, p. 165; "Sir, did you write this in your sleep, or is it in a dream only that I seem to read it? Bishop Bull's defence of the damnatory clause! From you, Sir, I have now my first information that Bishop Bull ever wrote

upon the subject." Then, enumerating the titles of his works, you add, p. 167, "In these treatises there is no defence of the damnatory clause, nor, that I recollect, any mention of the Athanasian creed. There is no defence of the damnatory clause in the Sermons and English Tracts, published by Mr. Nelson, nor can I find any such tract mentioned by Mr. Nelson among the Bishop's lost works; for many small pieces, which it was known he had written, were never found after his death. Where have I mentioned, Sir, with such high approbation a work which I declare I have never seen, and of which, you will forgive me, if I still doubt the existence?"

Notwithstanding this ridiculous parade, which hath helped to swell out your book, you might just as well have said, that I never wrote an Answer to your Charge, merely because I called my work Letters to Dr. Horsley; and I will engage, that whatever doubt *you* might have had, if you had given an order to any bookseller in London in the very words that I used, he would have sent you the *Judicium*, &c. *i. e. The Judgement of the Catholic Church in the three first Centuries, concerning the Necessity of believing that our Lord Jesus Christ is the true God.* Now, Sir, what is implied in the *necessity of believing*, but the condemnation of those who do not believe? The whole truth, and the occasion of all this lamentable outcry is, that, not having the book before me at the time, I said *the damnatory clause in the Athanasian creed*, instead of the *anathema annexed to the Nicene creed*, a thing of exactly the same nature.

Besides, from your account, one would imagine that, as you declare *yourself* no lover of damnatory clauses,

this good bishop, whose writings you so much recommend, was no more a friend to them than yourself, but that he might be the meekest and most candid of all christians To give a specimen, therefore, of this most excellent prelate's writings, I shall produce a few passages from the preface of this particular work, from which a judgement may be formed of the *object* and *spirit* of the whole.

Giving a reason for this publication, he says, "There have appeared a few years ago in England many writings of wicked men who have laboured with all their might to overturn the capital article of our creed, on which the hinge of christianity certainly turns, namely, concerning the Son of God, born of God the Father himself before all ages, very God of very God, by whom all things were made, who for our salvation was incarnate, and made man; some of them impudently defending the Arian, and some the Samosatenian blasphemy*."

He then quotes with approbation, a passage from Zanchius, in which he calls the writings of the unitarians *idle ravings*, *inepta deliria;* and afterwards speaking of Episcopius and others, who though orthodox themselves, pleaded for some moderation towards these erring brethren, he calls it "an attempt to reconcile Christ and Belial," and adds, "These men, professing to hold and believe with the catholics (in which I wish

* Prodiere in Anglia nostra, intra paucos abhinc annos, scripta non pauca hominum nefariorum qui dogma fidei nostræ κυριωτατον, in quo certe christianismi cardo vertitur (de filio nempe dei ante omnia secula ex ipso deo patre nato, vero deo de vero deo, per quem omnia condita fuere, nostræ salutis causa incarnato, homineque facto) labefactare atque evertere omni ope adnisi sunt; eorum aliis Arianam, aliis vero Samosatenianam blasphemiam impudentur propugnantibus.

they were sincere) in the truth of the article concerning the co-essential Son of God, yet do not acknowledge the necessity of it*." Then, with respect to their maintaining that the christian Fathers had the same moderation, he says, "It is throwing the greatest reproach upon the doctors, bishops, confessors, and martyrs of the best ages; as if in defending the greatest of all the articles of the christian religion, they were lukewarm, yea, absolutely cold;—whereas all those churches with one voice and judgement condemned the Arian and Socinian doctrine, as a most pernicious and deadly heresy†."

He further says that, as in his former works he had defended the *Nicene creed itself*, so in this, "he maintains and defends the *anathema annexed to it*, viz. those who say that there was a time when the Son of God was not, that he did not exist before he was born, and that he was made out of nothing, or out of any other hypostasis or substance, that he was either created, or subject to change or alteration, the catholic and apostolic church anathematizes‡."

He concludes the preface with saying, "This judge-

* Hi homines, cum veritatem articuli de co-essentiali dei filio cum catholicis se tenere atque credere profiteantur (utinam sincere) ejusdem tamen necessitatem minime agnoscunt.

† Adeoque consequenter optimorum sæculorum doctoribus episcopis, confessoribus, martyribus, gravissimam imposuerit contumeliam; quasi scilicet, in tutando capite religionis christianæ omnium maximo, tepidi, imo prorsus frigidi fuissent.——Quam ecclesiæ illæ omnes ut hæresin perniciosissimam ac θανατηφορον consentiente calculo ac judicio damnaverunt.

‡ In hoc opusculo αναθεματισμον symbolo isto annexum tuemur ac defendimus——τους δε λεγοντας ην ποτε ὁτι ουκ ην, και πριν γενηθηναι ουκ ην, και εξ ουκ οντων εγενετο, η εξ ἑτερας ὑποστασεως η ουσιας φασκοντας ειναι, η κτιστον, η τρεπτον, η αλλοιωτον τον ὑιον του θεου, τουτους αναθεματιζει ἡ καθολικη και αποστολικη εκκλησια.

ment of the universal church of Christ, in all times, all pious and sober minded persons will reverence; and therefore will be upon their guard against, and with all their souls abhor, the God-denying heresy of both the Samosatenians and the Arians *."

I need not, surely, go any further into a work of which this is the preface. I am tempted, however, to quote the form in which the Bishop closes this work, viz. "To the most holy and undivided Trinity, to God the Father, and to his co-essential and co-eternal word, and Son, for our salvation made incarnate, together with the Holy Spirit the comforter, be all praise, honour and glory, from angels and men, for ever and ever, Amen†."

Can you read all this, Sir, and not acknowledge that Bishop Bull was a friend to damnatory clauses; and if you be not so yourself, as you say you are not, how came you to recommend the writings of this fiery bishop so unreservedly as you have done? and indeed, how can you be a true member of that church which gives its sanction to these damnatory clauses. Those damnatory clauses are as much an article of faith in the church of England, as any of the *thirty-nine*, and he that does not *bona fide* maintain them, ought, in my opinion, to quit her communion. You, Sir, therefore, either do, or ought to believe, that myself and all who think as I do, shall *without doubt perish everlastingly*.

* Hoc judicium ecclesiæ Christi universalis omnium temporum reverebuntur certe pii ac sobrii omnes, adeoque ab αρνησιθεῳ Samosatenianorum simul et Arianorum hæresi cavebunt sibi, totoque animo abhorrebunt.

† Sanctissimæ atque individuæ trinitati, Deo patri, co-essentiali et coæterno verbo ac filio, nostræ salutis causa incarnato, una cum Spiritu sancto paracleto, ab angelis et hominibus tribuatur laus, honos, et gloria omnis in secula seculorum, Amen.

If you cannot say *amen* to this *curse*, you have no business where you are, and certainly ought not to pronounce it. For this your Athanasian creed asserts, and I suppose no *figure* was intended by the devout composer of it.

The first time that Bishop Bull's writings were recommended to me, was by a popish priest, in whose company I passed several days at Brussels, who took serious pains to make me a Roman catholic, and afterwards wrote to me very earnestly on the subject. But paying too little attention to the recommendation, I was unacquainted with the real character and value of this writer, till it was enforced by the archdeacon of St. Alban's. I am, &c.

LETTER XVII.

Of the Light in which the Dissenters are considered by the Archdeacon of St. Alban's, and of the Penalties to which the Unitarians among them are subject.

REV. SIR,

THOUGH you profess yourself to be *no lover of damnatory clauses*, p. 165, and now and then are pleased to drop some obliging expressions of respect for dissenters, it is, however, with a considerable mixture of contempt, and with an intimation that we unitarian dissenters (and all unitarians, we both agree, either are, or ought to be dissenters in this country) are subject to many pains and penalties, as the laws now stand. With

what view you threw out those hints, and so particularly recite those acts of parliament to the penalties of which we are obnoxious, is best known to yourself, and time will perhaps discover.

I had complained of the contempt with which you mentioned the places of worship among dissenters, when you called them *conventicles*. In your present publication, after something of an apology for using that word, which I think aukward enough, you do not perhaps much mend the matter, by saying, p. 167, "I could have wished that the use of it had been considered as one of the mere archaisms of my style, in which nothing of insult was intended. I must, however, declare, that it would give me particular pleasure to receive conviction that Mr. Lindsey's Meeting-house, and your own, are not more emphatically conventicles in your own sense, that is, in the worst sense of the word. From personal respect for you and him, I should be happy to be assured that you stand not within the danger of the 35th of Eliz. ch. i., or the 17th Ch. II. c. ii., to the penalties of which, and of other statutes, I must take the liberty to tell you, you are obnoxious, notwithstanding the late act of the 19th of his present Majesty in favour of dissenters, unless at the general or quarter sessions of the peace for the county where you live, you have made a certain declaration, which is required by that act, instead of the subscription to articles required by the former acts of toleration. I am sorry, Sir, to inform you, that I find no entry of Mr. Lindsey's declaration in the office of the clerk of the peace, either for the county of Middlesex, or the city of Westminster. Could I make the same inquiry concerning you (which the distance of your residence prevents) I fear I should

have the mortification to find that you have no more than your friend complied with the laws from which you claim protection. A report prevails that you both object to the declaration from conscientious scruples, a very sufficient excuse for not making it: but no excuse at all for doing what the law allows not to be done, except upon the express condition that the declaration be previously made."

You afterwards say, p. 169, "your meeting-house and his, contrary to your imagination, are illegal, unknown to the laws, and unprotected by them."

Here, Sir, it is you, and not we, who are mistaken. Both our *conventicles*, you will find, are protected, though we ourselves are not. The consequence, therefore, of any prosecution of me (if any person, taking the hint from you, should proceed to it) would be the depriving of the dissenters belonging to the New-Meeting at Birmingham of one of their present pastors: but the *Meeting-house* would remain under the protection of the law, as much as any of your parish churches, which owe all their consideration to the same law; and would not prevent their choosing another minister, who, if he had more caution than myself, might defy your malice; but the congregation that I serve, would think themselves disgraced by a minister of that timid character.

As you were so very desirous of getting information concerning my conduct in this business, I wonder that you should not have been able to find some person in this neighbourhood like-minded with yourself, to make the inquiry for you. However, I will save you and your friends that trouble, and perhaps some small expense, by informing you, that as I never made the *sub-*

scription required of all dissenters before the late act, so neither have I made the *declaration* which that act makes necessary to my legal toleration, nor have I at present any intention to do it.

I shall further inform you, and our readers, that when it was first proposed in *the general body of dissenting ministers in or near London* (of which, as I then resided pretty much in London, I was a member) whether we should desire our friends in parliament to promote the passing of the bill or not, I was one of those who voted for our continuing in our former situation; but we were over-ruled by a very great majority. The reason for my voting in this manner was, I believe, peculiar to myself. I observed, that I had not, on my own account, any objection to make the declaration proposed in that bill, with the exception of a single circumstance which I then mentioned, and which we all agreed had better be omitted, and which accordingly was struck out before the bill passed into a law. But I said that I perceived that many persons, for whom I had the greatest respect, had their serious scruples, and such as it was probable they would not be able to overcome; and I thought that the passing of the law, and especially a general compliance with it, would make them more noticed, and perhaps bring them into trouble; whereas, the requisitions of the former law were so unreasonable, that though few, if any of us, had complied with them, it did not appear that any body would ever molest us on that account. For the same reason that I did not then wish for the law to pass, I do not now choose unnecessarily to avail myself of it.

But with respect to myself, and many others, the thing is of little consequence. There are laws enow in

daughters, all the *little Babylons*, all the *lesser establishments*, of what I deem to be corrupt christianity, will fall with her, or soon after her; and therefore I apply to them as well as to the church of Rome, that awful warning, Rev. xviii. 4. *Come out of her, my people, that ye partake not of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.*

While we unitarians behave as good subjects, (and I do not know that we are worse thought of than other dissenters in this respect,) I have such confidence in the good sense of my countrymen, though without any particular obligation to yourself on this account, and in the spirit of the times, (which throughout all Europe is daily more favourable to freedom of inquiry and toleration, and less favourable to old and corrupt though venerable establishments,) that I have little doubt but that I shall be suffered to proceed as I have hitherto done, unmolested, promoting by every means in my power what I deem to be important *truth*, though our legislators in the last century voted it to be *heresy* and *blasphemy*. What our present legislative body, if the question was brought before them, would decree is unknown; but I am pretty confident that when the subject shall come properly before them (and this may be pretty soon) they will be disposed to hear reason and to do justice*.

From what you say of your own freedom of inquiry, one would think that you might have treated us dis-

* *The learned writer was mistaken in expecting that he should be permitted to proceed unmolested in his defence of important truth, having been driven from his pastoral charge by the disgraceful riots at Birmingham in July* 1791, *when his house was burned to the ground, and his laboratory, his library, and his papers were destroyed. He was right, however, in his expectation of the increas-*

really have, to keep our opinions to ourselves, and have no public worship at all? And yet between this conduct and our acting more or less openly in opposition to you, and incurring the penalties of the laws now in force against us, there is no medium.

If you really be a friend to any thing that deserves the name of *toleration*, you must feel for the disgrace of your country, on account of the unjust and impolitic restraints the laws of it lay upon us, and you will use your endeavours to promote the repeal of *all penal laws in matters of religion*, and likewise to lay open all civil offices to all persons who are qualified to fill them; which indeed is no more than is already done in several countries in Europe. That those who prefer the mode of religion now established should bear the whole expense of it, without compelling us to assist them in it, while they do nothing for ours in return, though a thing perfectly reasonable, is more than I expect the Archdeacon of St. Alban's to countenance. I, however, live in the firm belief that even this will take place some time or other; and my belief is grounded on this general and glorious truth, that there is a wise and good being at the head of all affairs, bringing good out of all evil. I therefore believe that good will finally take place of all evil, and, consequently, equity of injustice.

You Sir, as Archdeacon of St. Alban's, may believe that the church of England will continue to the end of the world, and that *all nations* (at least all that speak the English language, and can read the book of Common Prayer in the original) *will flow into it.* On the other hand, it is my firm persuasion that when *Babylon the great, the mother of harlots*, shall fall, all her

daughters, all the *little Babylons*, all the *lesser establishments*, of what I deem to be corrupt christianity, will fall with her, or soon after her; and therefore I apply to them as well as to the church of Rome, that awful warning, Rev. xviii. 4. *Come out of her, my people, that ye partake not of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.*

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* *The learned writer was mistaken in expecting that he should be permitted to proceed unmolested in his defence of important truth, having been driven from his pastoral charge by the disgraceful riots at Birmingham in July* 1791, *when his house was burned to the ground, and his laboratory, his library, and his papers were destroyed. He was right, however, in his expectation of the increas-*

senters with a little more respect. For after observing that you are *much at home in the Greek language*, and that you have read the ecclesiastical historians, you add, p. 163, "I had been many years in the habits of thinking for myself upon a variety of subjects before I opened Dr. Clarke's book. There is in most men a culpable timidity; you and I perhaps have overcome that general infirmity, but there is in most men a culpable timidity, which inclines them to be easily overawed by the authority of great names." It will make some persons smile to see you, Sir, groupe yourself with me upon this occasion, and they may ask for similar evidence of your having overcome this culpable timidity, and of your having really thought for yourself, when they see you professing to believe, and complying with every thing that those who do not think for themselves at all, profess to believe and comply with. Your profound admiration of Bishop Bull's writings is no proof of your thinking for yourself. All that can be inferred from it is, that you have made a wise choice of masters. The writer for whom I always profess the greatest admiration is Dr. Hartley, but I differ from him in many things, and things also of great consequence.

If, however, you still retain the habit of thinking for yourself, allow me to return your civility to me, when you joined my name, p. 164, to those of *Bolingbroke*, *Voltaire*, and *Gibbon*, by adding yours also to this list of *free inquirers*, and your sentence

ing liberality of succeeding times: the penal laws against the impugners of the doctrine of the Trinity having been totally repealed by a bill introduced into parliament by Mr. W. Smith, the upright member for Norwich, in July 1813, *which passed without any opposition through both houses.*—Ed.

will then close thus,—*a Gibbon, a Priestley, or a Horsley.*

For my own part, I cannot say that I much dislike my situation in the light in which I view the different characters; since I find myself placed between an *unbeliever* on the one hand, and a *high churchman* on the other. *Medio tutissimus ibis.*

I am, &c.

LETTER XVIII.

Of the Charge of wilful Misrepresentation, &c.

REV. SIR,

As both yourself and your *great and good ally*, Mr. Badcock, have employed so much of your respective publications on the subject of *perversions*, *wilful misrepresentations*, *artifice*, *management*, &c. &c. &c. (for you are at no loss for words or phrases of this import) it may not be improper to give you one short letter on that subject.

I was willing to hope that, in this second publication, you would have observed the rules of decency and of probability in your charges against me, and that you might have expressed some little concern for your former violations of them. But I am sorry to find, that, instead of retracting any thing, you have considerably added to your offences of this kind. You had before charged me with knowingly misquoting the English translation of the Bible, when, in fact, I should not have gained any thing by it. You now talk, p. 5, of my designedly omitting a significant adjective, as you

say, in a quotation from Athanasius, when I neither intended to quote nor to translate the passage, but only referred to, and gave the general sense of it; and this, I doubt not, was the true one. Yet upon this you raise loud exclamations concerning *truth, candour, consistency*, and *dealing in sarcasms*.

You also think with Mr. Badcock, that I really meant to conceal from the unlearned part of a quotation from Justin Martyr, which I printed in Greek at full length, and this in a public controversy with yourself, of whose vigilance in this respect I could not entertain a doubt. "The entire passage," you say, p. 88, "as long as it appears not in your translation, lay innocently enough in the Greek, at the bottom of your page." But I must have been an *ideot* indeed in plain English, and something worse than the *idiota* of Tertullian, as well as the *homo nefarius* of Bishop Bull, to have attempted a deception in these circumstances.

As, in another place, you speak more fully on the subject of my artifice and insincerity, enlarge upon the nature of it, and the degree of its guilt in controversial writings, I shall produce the passage at length, and then give a general answer to it.

"Indeed, Sir," you say, p. 159, "in quoting ancient authors when you have understood the original, which in many instances is not the case, you have too often been guilty of much reserve and management. This appears in some instances in which you cannot pretend that your own inadvertency, or your printer's, hath given occasion to unmerited imputations. I wish that my complaints upon this head had been groundless: but in justice to my own cause I could not suffer unfair quotations to pass undetected. God forbid that

I should draw any conclusion from this unseemly practice against the general probity of your character. But you will allow me to lament that men of integrity, in the service of what they think a good end, should indulge themselves so freely as they often do in the use of unjustifiable means. Time was when the practice was openly avowed, and Origen himself was among its defenders. The art which he recommended he scrupled not to employ. I have produced an instance, in which, to silence an adversary, he hath recourse to the wilful and deliberate allegation of a notorious falsehood. You have gone no such length as this. I think you may believe me sincere when I speak respectfully of your worth and integrity, notwithstanding that I find occasion to charge you with some degree of blame, in a sort in which the great character of Origen was more deeply infected. Would to God it had been otherwise. Would to God I could with truth have boasted 'To these low arts stooped Origen, but my contemporary, my great antagonist, disdains them.' How would it have heightened the pride of victory, could I have found a fair occasion to be thus the herald of my adversary's praise!"

All these, Sir, and such like charges of artful, and therefore highly criminal misrepresentation (for they cannot amount to any thing less notwithstanding all your qualifying clauses,) which you and Mr. Badcock are perpetually urging, are in their own nature too absurd to gain any credit, and therefore can only show that what you want in *argument* you are willing to make up some other way. I have completely vindicated the character of Origen, which you have endeavoured to blot; and as to *myself*, you are quite at liberty to think of me just as you please. I am not

conscious of any unfairness whatever in any part of my proceedings, but have a perfect willingness to bring before the public every thing that may enable them to form a true judgement on the subject of this controversy. If I knew of any circumstance favourable to your argument, I would produce it as readily as I should do any thing in favour of my own; and I am as willing to detect my own mistakes as you or any person can be to do it for me. For this I appeal to the tenor of all my writings, and to my general character, which I will venture to say is as fair as yours.

You are pleased, indeed, to balance the account of my wilful misrepresentations, &c. with an allowance for the *general probity of my character*, p. 160, and a *cordial esteem and affection for the virtues of it*, which, you say, *are great and amiable*. What you know of my private character I cannot tell, but I suppose not much; and I shall not attempt to balance your account in the same manner; for really of your private character I know but little, either good or evil; and therefore I presume the former, though the liberties you have taken as a *writer* are not very favourable to that presumption. But this kind of apology is absurd; and had I thought you or Mr. Badcock capable of the things with which you charge me, I should not say that "your virtues were either great or amiable."

By way of softening those charges, which materially affect my *moral character*, you sometimes (though it makes a poor compensation for defects of a moral nature) introduce compliments (whether sincerely or ironically is equally indifferent to me) respecting *merit of a philosophical kind*. These also, for want of information, I am unable to return. For if I were asked

what improvements in science the world owes to you, I really could not tell; and I think it is very possible, that, in fact, you are as much a stranger to my pursuits as I am to yours. By this I do not mean to insinuate that you have no merit as a *mathematician*, to which you make high pretensions; but though for some years I applied pretty closely to the study of pure mathematics, and was thought to have made some proficiency in them, it was when I had not the means of employing my time as I now do, so that I give but little attention to those matters. Whatever may be the case with you, I find that if I particularly cultivate one branch of knowledge, it must be at the expense of others. I have therefore made my choice of the different objects of pursuit, and shall hardly change it now, except, as I get older, to circumscribe my studies still more.

If any thing would justify a retort of such charges of unfairness, it would be your readiness, upon every slight occasion, to bring them against me. For we do not easily suspect others of what we feel we are incapable of ourselves. But as I am conscious of the utmost fairness in my own conduct, I cannot lightly believe the contrary of others.

As I observed to Mr. Venn, in the first theological controversy in which I engaged, p. 9, "It behoves us carefully to distinguish between a *latent insincerity*" (the nature and causes of which I there explain) "under the influence of which men deceive themselves, and that *direct prevarication*, with which those who are engaged in debate are too ready to charge one another, as if their adversaries knowingly concealed or opposed the truth. This is a crime of so heinous a nature, that I should be very unwilling to impute it to

any person whatever." I am therefore unwilling to charge it on you or Mr. Badcock, notwithstanding some appearances might seem to justify me in it.

I am the most puzzled to account for the strange and improbable history that you, Sir, have given of a church of orthodox Jews at Jerusalem after the time of Adrian, and the series of historical *facts*, as you have the assurance to call them, for which it is not possible that you should have any authority in ancient or even in modern writers; and yet had you yourself been present at the surrender of the place, and had drawn up the terms of capitulation, you could not have given a more distinct and positive account. But the fact, I believe, was, that, without any examination of your own, you took it for granted from the authority of Mosheim, (who had no authority for it himself,) that one leading circumstance was true, and then concluded that the other circumstances which you have added, and therefore *knew* that you added, must have been so too. On this you have not hesitated to relate the whole in one continued *narrative*, just as if you had been copying from some historian of the time; and Origen, who lived in those times, and in the very country, and whose veracity was never questioned before, is treated without ceremony as a *wilful liar*, because he has given a different account of things*.

* *The learned writer is under a mistake in supposing that Dr. Horsley* invented *the circumstances relating to the church at Ælia. The fact is, and the Archdeacon confesses it in his Reply to these Letters, part ii. chap. 2. that he did copy these circumstances from the note in Mosheim's Commentaries, &c. to which he refers. But Dr. Priestley at that time not having access to this work, consulted only Mosheim's Ecclesiastical History, in which Mosheim had with great discretion omitted many of those circumstances which he had introduced into his Commentaries, and which had no foundation but*

As it has been very much my object to trace *effects* to their *causes*, and I consider the human mind, and consequently all human actions, to be subject to *laws* as regular as those which operate in my laboratory, (for want of knowing or attending to which Mr. Gibbon has egregiously failed in his account of the causes of the spread of christianity, and you in this controversy,) I had framed an hypothesis to account for Mr. Badcock's censure of what I said concerning Eusebius; but not being quite satisfied with it I rejected it. However, notwithstanding strong appearances, I am still willing to hope that the misrepresentation, though exceedingly gross, was not directly wilful.

I am, &c.

LETTER XIX.

Miscellaneous Articles, and the Conclusion.

Rev. Sir,

Disposed as you are to make the most of every trifling oversight that you can discover in my History, and of every concession that I make to you, I still have no objection to acknowledge any *real mistake* that I have fallen into, important or unimportant; and I shall certainly correct all such in any future edition of my work; and likewise, as far as I am able, in the trans-

in his own imagination, as the Archdeacon afterwards found to his great disappointment and chagrin. And the remainder of this controversy is occupied chiefly in elaborate and ingenious but unsuccessful efforts to extricate himself from the difficulties in which he had involved himself by hastily adopting the unfounded positions and calumnies of Mosheim.—Ed.

lations that are making of it into foreign languages. I shall now make *two* acknowledgements, and let our readers judge of their importance; and how little my History loses for want of being perfectly correct in those particulars.

I had said that "Valesius was of opinion that the history of Hegesippus was neglected and lost, because it was observed to favour the unitarian doctrine;" whereas I should have said, "on account of the errors which it contained, and that those errors could not be supposed to be any other than those of the unitarians;" and if I had consulted the passage at the time, I certainly should have expressed myself in that more cautious manner. But of what consequence is this circumstance to my great argument? Mr. Badcock, having looked for the passage to which I refer, and not being able to find it, seems to have imagined that I had no such passage to produce. He therefore, after his insolent manner, challenges me to produce it, and to *put him to shame.* That I believe to be impossible, otherwise it would have been effectually done in my Remarks on the Monthly Review; at least, by my notice of his most shameful conduct with respect to my censure of Eusebius, p. 21, of which he says nothing at all in his *Letter to me.* I suppose he thought it *not to be regarded.* However the passage which I refer to, and which sufficiently answers my purpose, is as follows: "Moreover, those books of Clement contained a short and compendious exposition of both the testaments, as Photius, in his *Bibliotheca* witnesses; but on account of the errors with which they abounded being negligently kept, they were at length lost; nor was there any other reason, in my opinion, why the

books of Papias, Hegesippus, and others of the ancients are now lost*."

You, Sir, however, have observed this passage, and you say, p. 4, "Valesius has indeed expressed an opinion that the work of Hegesippus was neglected by the ancients on account of errors which it contained. But what the errors might be which might occasion this neglect is a point upon which Valesius is silent. And what right have you to suppose that the unitarian doctrine was the error which Valesius ascribed to Hegesippus more than to Clemens Alexandrinus, upon whose last work of the Hypotyposes he passes the same judgement?"

I answer, that there were no errors of any consequence ascribed to that early age besides those of the Gnostics and of the unitarians. The former certainly were not those that Valesius could allude to with respect to Hegesippus, because this writer mentions the Gnostics very particularly as heretics, but makes no mention of unitarians at all; though they certainly existed, and I doubt not constituted the great body of unlearned christians in his time, which is one circumstance that, together with his being a *Jewish christian*, (all of whom are expressly said to have been Ebionites, and none of them to have believed the divinity of Christ,) leads me to conclude that he was an unitarian himself. Though Clemens Alexandrinus was not an unitarian, yet he never calls unitarians *heretics*; and

* Porro ii Clementis libri continebant brevem et compendiariam utriusque testamenti expositionem, ut testatur Photius in Bibliotheca. Ob errores autem quibus scatebant, negligentius habiti, tandem perierunt. Nec alia, meo quidem judicio, causa est, cur Papiæ et Hegesippi, aliorumque veterum libri, interciderint. In Euseb. Hist. lib. v. cap. 11.

since in his accounts of *heretics in general*, which are pretty frequent in his works, he evidently means the *Gnostics only*, and therefore virtually excludes unitarians from that description of men; it is by no means improbable but that, in those writings of his which are lost, he might have said things directly in favour of unitarians.

In this passage Valesius also mentions the writings of Papias as having, in his opinion, been lost for the same reason. Now Papias has certainly been supposed to be an Ebionite. Mr. Whiston has made this very probable from a variety of circumstances. See his Account of the Ceasing of Miracles, p. 18. In the same tract he gives his reasons for supposing Hegesippus to have been an Ebionite, and he expresses his wonder, "that he should have had the good fortune to be so long esteemed by the learned for a catholic," p. 21, &c. In this Mr. Whiston may be supposed to have been sufficiently impartial, as he was an Arian, and expresses great dislike of the Ebionites; as, indeed, Arians always have done.

I also acknowledge that I ought not to have exempted Epiphanius (as you have observed, p. 4, though with more severity than the case required) from the impropriety of charging Noetus with being a Patripassian. But this also is a circumstance of as little consequence to the main argument as the former, though my negligence with respect to it, I frankly own, was greater. I had myself discovered the mistake, and should have corrected it, if your Letters to me had never appeared. That the Patripassian notion was injuriously charged upon the unitarians of antiquity is sufficiently shown by Beausobre, who was himself a trinitarian and a man of

learning if ever there was one. This charge was so common that, without any proper evidence whatever, all the unitarians are called Patripassians by one writer or other. Optatus even says that Ebion, the supposed father of the Ebionites, was a Patripassian *, though no early writer who mentions the Ebionites says any such thing of them.

I must, however, acknowledge that you have one just cause of triumph over me, and all the friends of free inquiry; but this also, as with respect to every other advantage which you have gained, you exult in too much, and make too great account of. The Monthly Review, which was formerly in our favour, is now completely yours. Your Charge, which contains the highest *orthodoxy*, and discovers the greatest spirit of *church authority* of any production in this age, has been examined before that tribunal, and been honoured with an unqualified approbation. And as to your present publication, which has no less merit of the same kind, its praises, I doubt not, are already *sung*, or at least *set to music*, and the whole choir of Reviewers, who have been unanimous in their condemnation of me, are ready to join the chorus on this occasion.

You plead your right, p. 78, to make the most of this your new acquisition; and in this you think yourself justified by my conduct in the publication of small and cheap pamphlets, for the purpose of disseminating my principles among the lower and poorer class of people, though, in my opinion, the two cases are very different indeed. This post, however, which we were once in possession of, you and your friends have now

* Ut Hebion qui argumentabatur patrem passum esse, non filium. Lib. iv. p. 91.

got, and it is not to be supposed that you will ask our leave what use to make of it; so that we must yield with as good a grace as we can, and endeavour to make our ground good elsewhere.

II.

One of your curious proofs of my *ignorance*, and of my being entirely unqualified to write the *history of early times*, is my not being acquainted with the opinions of some *modern writers*, and those either difficult to procure, or such as could have been of little use to me, if I had known them. I acknowledged that I had not heard of D. Zuicker; I did not know what Episcopius, Petavius, or Huetius, thought on a particular subject, and I had not read your great authority, bishop Bull. "What is this," you say, p. 7, "but to confess that you are indeed little redde in the principal writers, either on your own side of the question or the opposite? But as no man, I presume, is born with an intuitive knowledge of the opinions, or the facts, of past ages, the historian of religious corruptions, confessing himself unredde in the *polemical divines*, confesses ignorance of his subject. You repel the imputation of *plagiarism* by the most disgraceful confession of *ignorance*, to which foiled polemic ever was reduced."

Now the probability is, that my reading in polemical divinity is much more extensive than yours. But if it had been ten times greater than it is, I do not know whether, instead of being advantageous, it might not have been of disservice to me, in ascertaining the state of things in the early ages, to the knowledge of which these authors had no better access than myself. You yourself, I am pretty confident, have formed your opi-

nions on these subjects chiefly from modern writers; and it has been by this means, and by the help of your fertile imagination, as I have shown, that you have been so miserably misled as you have been.

III.

You and Mr. Badcock both pride yourselves in your knowledge of the Greek language, and you insult me, and my *Vindicator*, for our ignorance of it. But to criticize others is the easiest road to fame. In the same way you might set yourself up even against Casaubon, Scaliger, or Bentley, to whom you acknowledge, p. 58, that you "stand bowing at a distance:" for the greatest scholars sometimes make great mistakes.

Out of the number of citations that I have made, is it extraordinary that two or three, and those of no great consequence, should have been found in some degree faulty? You and your ally have had no occasion to produce many, and writing in controversy, would naturally be more guarded; and yet your errors in this way far exceed mine. Concerning one of these, you say, p. 15, "the words are so very clear, that the sense was hardly to be missed at first sight, by a school boy in the second year of Greek." What, then, will be said of the man who can translate *idiota*, *ideot*, who can argue from ούτος as necessarily referring to *a person* (for if this was not your meaning, it was impertinent to alledge it at all) and censure me for rendering ουκ αλλω τινι ή by *to nothing but?* And what can you say in excuse for your learned ally translating αλλοι γαρ κατ' αλλον τροπον, *others upon another plan*, instead of *some in one way and others in another*, on which he founds the most improbable and malignant of all his accusations

against me, for *concealment, wilful perversion, &c.?* And what can you say for the apology he has made for his blunder, when he only allows that *the words may be more accurately rendered* as I have done; whereas, every person who is at all acquainted with Greek, must know that, in that connexion, and especially if the force of the particle γαρ be attended to, the phrase will not bear any other rendering? A writer who assumes so much as he has done, and who has treated my *Vindicator*, on the subject of *Greek*, with a degree of insolence that exceeds any thing that I have met with, and yet has himself blundered in this manner, ought to *kiss the rod*, if not, without a figure, to *feel* it, and *take shame to himself*. His friends, however, if he have any, must blush for him.

Though from the age of seventeen to twenty-seven, I believe, I read as much Greek as almost any man can be supposed to have read in the same time, and after that taught it nine years, the last six of them at Warrington, and chiefly the higher Greek classics (for the elements of the language were not taught in that academy) I do not pretend ever to have been properly *at home* in the language. I mean so as to read it with the same ease with which it is common to read Latin or French (indeed I have not yet met with any man who pretended that he could do this), and having given less attention to that language since I have had the means of employing my time better, your Scotch correspondent may be right in observing, p. 182, that *I am but very moderately skilled in it*, and at my time of life, my acquaintance with it is not likely to improve. However, such as it is, I shall make the best use that I can of it in the *larger work* on which I am now employed. It

is possible, however, that I might make but a bad exchange of the remains of my Greek literature for yours, or that of your Scotch correspondent.

IV.

You are pleased to make some apology for your *haughty style*, and the contemptuous airs you gave yourself, both with respect to Dissenters, and to your own inferior Clergy. To what I observed on this subject, you now say, p. 158, "it might be a sufficient, and not an unbecoming reply, to remind you that I spoke *ex cathedra*, and hold myself accountable for the advice which I gave to no human judicature, except the King, the metropolitan, and my diocesan. This would indeed, be the only answer, which I should condescend to give to any one for whom I retained not, under all our differences, a very considerable degree of personal esteem. But as Dr. Priestley is my adversary, in some points I could wish to set him right, and in some I desire to explain."

A great part of this apology was, indeed, Sir, quite unnecessary, as no person can read your *Charge* and doubt your having delivered it *ex cathedra*. The inferior, the *far inferior* clergy, to whom it was addressed, were, I presume, fully sensible of it. The only question is, whether you ever think that you are not speaking *ex cathedra?* Please, however, to remember that I am not one of those to whom you have any right to speak in that manner, and that I do not hold myself accountable to any metropolitan, or diocesan, or even to the king, or any person or potentate on earth, in matters of religion. Also while I have "credit enough (p. 171,) to collect," or to find, "a congregation," I

shall preach, without applying to your church, or the church of Rome, for *holy orders*; and I shall think my *conventicle* as reputable a place for preaching as any of your *churches*; though you, p. 169, think it *arrogant* in me to make the comparison between them.

V.

I can hardly believe that I am living in the close of the eighteenth century, when I read what you say in this publication concerning the *dignity and the power of the priesthood*, derived by *regular succession*, p. 171, from the apostles, and of course through the Popes, and find that you seriously disallow of my authority to exercise the sacred function, &c. As a curiosity, in the year 1784, I am tempted to give my reader a pretty long extract from your work on this subject. After enumerating the mischiefs that you say, p. 170, you have seen in your own country, in the course of your own life, you add, "When I consider that the root of all those evils has been the prevalency of a principle, of which you seem disposed to be an advocate, that every man who has credit enough to collect a congregation has a right, over which the magistrate cannot without tyranny exercise controul, to celebrate divine worship, according to his own form, and to propagate his own opinions; I am inclined to be jealous of a principle which has proved, I had almost said, so ruinous; and I lean the more to the opinion, that the commission of a ministry, perpetuated by regular succession, is something more than a dream of cloystered gownsmen, or a tale imposed upon the vulgar, to serve the ends of avarice and ambition. For whatever confusion human folly may admit, a divine institution must have

within itself a provision for harmony and order. And, upon those principles, though I wish that all indulgence should be shown to tender consciences, and will ever be an advocate for the largest toleration that may be consistent with political wisdom (being indeed persuaded that the restraints of human laws must be used with the greatest gentleness and moderation to be rendered means of strengthening the bonds of christian peace and amity) yet I could wish to plant a principle of severe restraint in the consciences of men. I could wish that the importance of the ministerial office were considered, that the practice of antiquity were regarded, and that it might not seem a matter of perfect indifference to the laity, to what house of worship they resort. I cannot admit that every assembly of grave and virtuous men, in which grave and virtuous men take upon them to officiate, is to be dignified with the appellation of a *church*," &c.

That these doctrines, which will justify all the violence of the church of Rome, and which condemn the reformation, should be maintained by a protestant divine at this day is rather extraordinary. I can almost fancy that the dial of Ahaz has once more gone back, and brought us to the time of Dr. Sacheverel, if not that of Archbishop Laud. But were I, in my turn, to make an enumeration of the complicated mischiefs that have arisen both to the cause of christianity, and the peace of society, from *church establishments* (but it would be digressing too far from the object of this controversy to do it) it would soon appear that it was high time that this boasted *alliance between the* CHURCH *and the* STATE was entirely broken; as it has proved infinitely injurious to both the contracting parties, though occasionally useful to those *churchmen* and *statesmen* who,

to serve the purposes of their own ambition, had drawn the contract.

When I contemplate the dignity you assume as *Archdeacon*, and the high tone of your whole performance, superior to any thing *on my shelves*, I wonder that you should profess any respect for tender consciences at all. I find, however, that the respect you profess for dissenters is only for those who are *favoured by the laws*; so that our obligations to you are not great; nor do you think there is any impropriety in the restraints of human laws in matters of religion, only you would have them used, p. 171, *with gentleness and moderation*. How far this gentleness and moderation would go, if you really thought the church in danger, I cannot tell. I am, therefore, happy that you are so easy on that account, as you represent yourself, p. 8.

You are pleased, however, though in no perfect consistence with what you say of the *powers of the priesthood*, as derived by succession from the apostles, to say, p. 161, "You will remember that I make the learning and the piety of her clergy, of which ample monuments are extant, the basis of her pre-eminence." I have no disposition to detract from the learning or the piety there may be among you; but as you celebrate your own praises, I will take the liberty to observe, that, allowance being made for your superior numbers and superior advantages, with respect to conveniences for study, from which, by a policy as weak as it is illiberal, you exclude dissenters, (thinking, perhaps, to make us despicable, by keeping us in ignorance,) I do not think that the body of dissenting ministers, with all their disadvantages, need be afraid of a comparison with you; and candid persons among the clergy have acknowledged the benefit you have

derived from us; not to say that you are indebted to us for some of your greatest ornaments, as Tillotson, Butler, and Secker.

In what you say of Dr. Chandler (whose infirmity, and I may add whose misfortune, it was to pay too much court to leading men both in the church and in the state), viz. that he preferred the church of England to any other establishment of christianity, p. 161, it would be no great compliment from me if I should say it after him. But I really cannot do it; and if I could adopt your idea of the transmission of the powers of the priesthood from the apostles, and was to conform to any establishment, I should choose to be member of a much older and more venerable establishment than yours, and in which the claim to that valuable succession should be less liable to litigation.

As to yourself in particular, who are so proud of being *a churchman*, it would have been happy for the public, and likewise a particular satisfaction to myself, if you had had a greater share of that *learning* of which you think your church possessed. More information would then have been given to our readers by both of us; and at least I might have been able to say with the person who examined Dr. Clarke, *Probe me exercuisti.* All I can now say is, that I have made some use of your *ignorance*, though I should have made more of your *knowledge*, to throw light on the subject of our discussion. My task has been much too easy; but I would willingly have done more if there had been any occasion for it, or indeed a propriety in it.

I am, Sir, your very humble servant,

J. PRIESTLEY.

BIRMINGHAM, *September*, 1784.

APPENDIX.

The first of the following Paragraphs, which was to have been the last of Letter VIII. p. 232, having been overlooked at the Time of printing, I have thought proper to give it in this place, and to add to it all that follows.

ADMITTING that the apostles had taught any doctrines of a peculiarly sublime nature, and above the comprehension of ordinary christians; yet as all their teaching was in public, and there were no *secrets* among them, nothing corresponding to the *mysteries* of the heathens, the common people must have heard of these sublime things, and have been accustomed to the sound of the language in which they were expressed; and they would have learned to respect what they could not understand. They could never have been *offended* and *staggered* at things which they and their fathers before them had always been in the hearing of.

Besides this argument for the novelty of the doctrine of the trinity, from the *offence* that was given by it in the time of Tertullian, when, as far as I can find, the common people first heard of it; that this class of persons were generally unitarians before and even after the council of Nice, appears pretty clearly from several circumstances in the history of those times. Besides, that we do not read of any of the *laity* being excommunicated along with Noetus, Paul of Samosata, or

Photinus (though unitarians are acknowledged to have been in great numbers in their days, and to have been in communion with the catholic church) when the two last were deposed from their sees, the common people were their friends. After the bishops had deposed Paul of Samosata, he could not be expelled from the episcopal house till the aid of the emperor Aurelian was called in, and he may be supposed to have been offended at him, for his having been in the interest of his rival Zenobia. This could not have been necessary, if the majority of his people had not been with him, and therefore, if his deposition had not, in fact, been unjust.

As to Photinus, he was so popular in his diocese, that his solemn deposition by three councils could not remove him from his see. "He defended himself," says Tillemont (History of the Arians, vol. i. p. 116.) "against the authority of the church, by the affection which his people had for him, even to the year 351; though his heresy began to appear as early as 342 or 343, according to Socrates; and the Eusebians condemned it in one of their confessions of faith in 345." At length the emperor Constantius, a zealous Arian, thought it necessary to interfere, and get him banished in a council held at Sirmium itself. I may add, that Marcellus of Ancyra left Galatia full of unitarians, as Basil afterwards found to his cost. Had the body of christians in those times been generally trinitarians, we dissenters, who are pretty much in the same situation with unitarians in those times, not having the countenance of government, know well how ready the common people would have been to take an active part in those affairs.

"Sabellianism," which was precisely the same thing with unitarianism in former times, Dr. Lardner says (Credibility, vol. iv. p. 606,) "must have been very agreeable to the apprehensions of many people. Eusebius speaks of its increasing very much in Egypt, when Dionysius of Alexandria opposed it. According to Athanasius, the occasion of Dionysius writing upon that head was, that *some of the bishops of Africa followed the doctrine of Sabellius, and they prevailed to such a degree, that the Son of God was scarce any longer preached in the churches.*"

It is also remarkable that the first treatise that was ever written against the unitarian doctrine was that of Tertullian against Praxeas, with whom he was particularly provoked, on account of the active part he had taken against Montanus, in getting him excommunicated and expelled from the church of Rome. This, says Le Sueur, was the cause of the bitterness with which Tertullian wrote against him.—Now there were treatises against the Gnostics in a much earlier period. Why then were none written against the unitarians, since pure unitarianism was certainly as old as Gnosticism; and if it had been deemed a *heresy* at all, it would certainly have been thought to be of the most alarming nature, as it is considered at present? In the opinions of those who are now called *orthodox*, the Gnostics thought much more honourably of Christ than the unitarians did. The unitarians were likewise much more numerous, and in the bosom of the church itself, a circumstance which might be expected to render them peculiarly obnoxious.

No. II.

I SHALL extend this Appendix in order to observe that, to the many false charges and insinuations of Dr. Horsley, which are noticed in the preceding Letters, he has added another to exculpate himself for the contempt which he had expressed of dissenters. "If you are still," he says, p. 172, "disposed to be indignant about this harmless word" (conventicle), "recollect, I beseech you, with what respect you have yourself treated the venerable body to which I belong, the clergy of the establishment. You divide it into two classes only, the *ignorant* and the *insincere*. Have I no share in this opprobrium of my order? Have I no right to be indignant in my turn?"

I do not pretend to recollect all that I have written, but I have such a consciousness of never having *meant* or *intended to say* what Dr. Horsley here charges me with, that I will venture to assert, that he cannot have any more authority for this than for the privileges granted to the Jewish christians of Jerusalem on their abandonding the ceremonies of their old religion. That many of the clergy are *ignorant* none can deny; because it is true of every body of clergy in the world; and that some are *insincere* may also, without great uncharitableness, be supposed of any large body of men. Of one kind of insincerity the fact is too evident to be denied of several of the members of the church of England. For no man can be sincere in professing to believe what he openly writes against. And are there not persons in communion with the church of England who publicly controvert the articles of it; which articles,

while they continue in the church, and especially if they officiate in it, they virtually profess to believe. That many are both learned and sincere I have acknowledged with respect to the clergy of the church of Rome, and I think I could hardly say less of those of the church of England. I shall therefore consider this charge of Dr. Horsley as a mere *calumny* till he shall produce some evidence for it; and if, in any of my writings, he can find sufficient authority for his accusation, I here retract what I advanced, and ask pardon for it.

The *learning* of many divines in the church of Rome and that of England I have never denied. Bishop Hurd I have styled *learned* and *able*, though, in my opinion, nothing can be weaker than his reasoning on the subject of church establishments. As to *sincerity*, I have always been ready to acknowledge it with respect to both the churches. As one proof of this I shall quote a passage from the Sermon I preached *on accepting the pastoral office* in this place, p. 30, "Think not that the most fervent zeal for what are apprehended to be the genuine doctrines of the gospel is at all inconsistent with true *christian charity*, which always judges of particular persons according to the advantages they have enjoyed, and of the final state of men by their *sincerity* only. And for my own part, I have no doubt but that, though the church of Rome be the proper *Antichrist* of the apostles, not only innumerable zealous papists, but even some popes themselves, and since the Reformation, will sit down with Luther, with Calvin, and with Socinus, in the kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Known unto

God alone are the hearts of men; and the man who honestly pursues truth, and who acts according to the best lights that God gives him an opportunity of acquiring, will be he whom the *God of truth* and uprightness will approve; and none will suffer a greater or more just condemnation than those who *hold the truth in unrighteousness.* Much rather would I be in the case of many worthy persons in the church of England, or the church of Rome, who, at the same time that they are fully sensible of the corruptions and errors of the system in which they are entangled, are not able to break their chains, than, from a spirit the reverse of that of the gospel, make an improper use of my own liberty by insulting them."

Will Dr. Horsley himself say this after me? With respect to real candour, few, I think, will go greater lengths than I have done. He charges me with many instances of *wilful misrepresentation*, which is certainly a charge of *insincerity*; whereas I have not charged him with any, though I might have done it with much greater appearance of reason. With respect to *ignorance*, viz. of what relates to the subject of this controversy, with which he likewise repeatedly charges me, I own that I return the accusation, and let our readers judge between us.

No. III.

HAVING shown these Letters to some of my friends, and been favoured with their remarks, I wish to add the following explanations:

I. P. 191. A passage has been pointed out to me in Grotius, (Opera, vol. ii. p. 5.) in which he speaks of the Nazarenes as "holding the common faith of other christians with respect to Christ, which the Ebionites did not." But as the opinion of the Ebionites, of which he is there speaking, was that Christ was the son of Joseph, all that can be inferred from the passage is, that, in his opinion, the Nazarenes differed from the Ebionites, by believing the doctrine of the miraculous conception. By the *common faith of christians* in that early age (supposing him to have had a view to the doctrine concerning Christ more extensively considered) Grotius, no doubt, meant his own opinion, which was far from that *high orthodoxy* which Dr. Horsley ascribes to the Nazarenes.

Grotius also says that "it is well observed by Sulpitius Severus, that all the Jewish christians till the time of Adrian held that Christ was God, though they observed the law of Moses," in the passage which I have quoted from him, p. 41. But the sense in which Grotius understood the term *God* in this place must be explained by his own sentiments concerning Christ. As to Sulpitius himself, he must be considered as having said nothing more than that "almost all the Jews at Jerusalem were christians, though they observed the law of Moses." This writer's mere assertion, that the Jewish christians held Christ to be God, in the proper sense of the word, unsupported by any reasons for it, is even less to be regarded than that of Eusebius.

II. The latter part of the quotation from Chrysostom, p. 242, 243, will admit of a translation more favourable to my purpose, by introducing a parenthesis and

a note of interrogation, as follows: "How could men who were then first taken from their altars, idols, &c. (for such was the worship of the heathens) and being then first brought off from these abominations, readily receive sublime doctrines?"

LETTERS

TO

DR. HORSLEY,

PART III.

CONTAINING

AN ANSWER

TO

HIS REMARKS ON LETTERS, PART II.

BY JOSEPH PRIESTLEY, LL.D.F.R.S.

Infelix! quæ tanta animum dementia cepit!
Non vires alias, conversaque numina sentis? VIRGIL.

PREFACE.

When, in the advertisement of my History of early Opinions concerning Christ, I pledged myself to show that Dr. Horsley's Remarks on my Letters to him were "as defective in argument as they are in temper," I did not mean that I would animadvert upon them *immediately*, or very soon; but intended to wait till I should hear what would be objected to that larger work, and then reply to him and others at the same time. I found, however, that the advertisement had raised a general expectation of a *speedy* reply to Dr. Horsley in particular; and being unwilling to disappoint any expectations I had even unintentionally excited, and more unwilling to appear desirous of shrinking from this discussion, I have done at present what many of my friends will probably think might as well have been deferred a while longer.

Besides, as Dr. Horsley's Remarks were written before he had seen my large History, I thought it might not be amiss, in this manner, to close *the first act in our drama*; the *second* being reserved for what may be occasioned by that work, which will probably be much more considerable than any thing that has been produced by the History of the Corruptions of Christianity. And my design (after the termination of the present discussion with Dr. Horsley, which must soon come to an issue) is to wait a year or two, till I see what the publication of my large work on this subject shall produce, and then to reply to all my opponents

at once; frankly acknowledging any mistakes I shall appear to have fallen into, and vindicating whatever I shall think capable of it, and deserving it.

As this is a controversy that will probably have lasting consequences, let all who engage in it, on either side, be careful to acquit themselves in proportion to the character which they apprehend they have at stake; but above all, let *truth* be our great object. Our readers will easily perceive whether it be so or not. We shall sooner deceive ourselves than them. And least of all can we impose upon that great Being who is *the God of truth*, who secretly guides all our pursuits, and whose excellent purposes will be answered by them, with whatever views we may engage in them.

LETTERS

TO THE

ARCHDEACON OF ST. ALBAN'S.

AN INTRODUCTORY LETTER.

REV. SIR,

IN the course of our controversy, you maintained that there was *a church of trinitarian Jewish christians at Jerusalem after the time of Adrian*; and as the account that Origen gives of the state of things in his time does not admit of the existence of such a church, you scrupled not to say, that "he had recourse to the wilful and deliberate allegation of a notorious falsehood." This you did on so little foundation, that I charged you with being *a falsifier of history, and a defamer of the character of the dead.*

On this article you have thought proper (notwithstanding your previously declared resolution to the contrary) to make your defence, in which you produce five passages from ancient writers, two from Origen himself, two from Jerom, and one from Epiphanius. In these Letters I undertake to show that, though you have taken eighteen months to write, and to revise your Remarks, you have grossly misunderstood, or misapplied, all the passages, so that not one of them is to your purpose, and my charge still remains in its full force. For the justness of *my* interpretation of the

passages in question, I appeal to all who have any pretensions to scholarship, in this or any other country, and in this public manner I call upon you to vindicate *your own.*

On this article, at least, an article deliberately selected by yourself, let the controversy between us come to a fair issue. Nothing has been or shall be wanting to it on my part; and therefore the Public will certainly expect your explicit and speedy answer.

I am, Reverend Sir,

Your very humble Servant,

J. PRIESTLEY.

BIRMINGHAM, *June* 1, 1786.

LETTER I.

Of the Veracity of Origen.

REV. SIR,

AFTER having indulged your indolence, as you say, eighteen months, I am happy to find that, notwithstanding your opinion of my *manifest insufficiency* as your antagonist, (which you observe "left you at liberty to indulge yourself without seeming to desert your cause,") there was something in my Letters to you that has at length roused you to make a reply. To me this is a very high gratification. For, my predominant disposition not being indolence, I rejoice in any circumstance that contributes to keep the subject of our controversy in view; being confident that nothing but a continued attention to it is requisite to a

speedy decision in favour of the cause that I have espoused, which I cannot help considering as of the greatest importance to the cause of christianity itself.

I should have been more pleased if you had pursued the discussion of every article in debate between us; but, as you have thought proper to confine yourself chiefly to what relates to the orthodoxy of the primitive Jewish church, I must do the same, first considering what you have advanced in order to impeach the veracity of Origen, and then the testimonies of Epiphanius and Jerom, as evidences of the existence of a whole church of orthodox Jews at Jerusalem after the time of Adrian.

"In the second book against Celsus," (to use your own words, p. 22.) "near the beginning of the book, Origen asserts of the Hebrew christians of his own times, without exception, that they had not abandoned the laws and customs of their ancestors, and that for that reason they were called *Ebionites*." This is also the appellation that he gives to all the Jewish christians, of whom he makes two classes, one of them believing the miraculous conception of Jesus, and the other denying it; but neither of them admitting his divinity.

This testimony of such a person as Origen to the unitarianism of all the Jewish christians *in his time*, goes so near to prove the unitarianism of the great body of Jewish christians, and consequently of the christian church in general, *in the time of the apostles*, that I do not wonder at your wishing to set it aside; and it is so full and express, that you have no other way of doing it than by maintaining that this most respectable man knowingly asserted an untruth. You even add that you would not take his evidence upon

oath. Indeed, this writer was so circumstanced, in consequence of living so near Judæa, and sometimes in it, that he could not but have known whether there was any considerable body of Jewish christians who believed the doctrine of the trinity, and who had abandoned the customs of their ancestors, or not; so that, if what he asserted be an untruth, it *must* have been a *wilful* one, and (as serving the purpose of his argument) a *deliberate* one.

There are, however, some circumstances attending this charge of a wilful falsehood against Origen, that I should have thought might have made you pause before you had advanced it so confidently as you have done.

The general character of Origen makes the supposition highly improbable. For he was a man not more distinguished by his genius and learning, (in which he had confessedly no superior in the age in which he lived,) than he was by his integrity and his firmness in the cause of christian truth; and when, in a subsequent age, his opinions were deemed to be heretical, his greatest enemies left his moral character unimpeached. In such esteem was he universally held, that, as Eusebius informs us, it was generally said of him, "As was his speech, such was his conduct; and as was his conduct, such was his speech*:" his eloquence and the virtues of his life corresponding to each other. And yet this is the man whose evidence, because it makes against yourself, you declare that you would not admit upon oath.

Had the testimony of Origen to the unitarianism of

* Οἷον γοῦν τὸν λόγον τοιόνδε φασὶ τὸν τρόπον· καὶ οἷον τὸν τρόπον τοιόνδε καὶ τὸν λόγον ἐπεδείκνυτο. Euseb. Hist. l. vi. cap. 3. p. 261.

the great body of Jewish christians not been well founded, it was greatly the purpose of many of the early writers (and particularly of Eusebius, who maintained the novelty of the unitarian doctrine) to have refuted it. But neither Eusebius nor any other ancient writer, the most zealous for orthodoxy, and the most hostile to Origen on other accounts, has attempted it. Might it not have been expected of Eusebius in particular, that after he had copied Origen's account of the Ebionites, by dividing them into two classes, just as he had done, (viz. some of them believing the miraculous conception, and others not,) he would have added that, notwithstanding what Origen had said to the contrary, many of them had abandoned the law of Moses, and were believers in the divinity of Christ? But he has not done any such thing. He therefore must have known that he could not do it, and he was not disposed to tell a wilful lie in the case. Indeed, I am willing to think that few persons are so abandoned as to be capable of doing this.

With respect to this particular assertion concerning the state of the Jewish christians in the time of Origen, it is so circumstanced, that, if he had even been *capable* of asserting a falsehood, *this* was the last that he would have had recourse to; because he was writing in a public controversy, in which he has insisted largely on this particular article, and insulted his adversary for his ignorance of a notorious fact. In this situation, he must have been nothing less than infatuated to have advanced what all his readers must have known to be false. A falsehood so circumstanced, and which must have been a wilful one, would have been so evidently

ruinous to his credit, and so fatal to his cause, that he must have been a fool not to have seen it.

Besides, this particular circumstance, of the christian Jews not abandoning the customs of their ancestors, was not of so much consequence to his general argument in defence of christianity, but that he might very well have neglected it. Nothing, therefore, but a perfect confidence that what he did advance was true, could have led him to make any declaration on the subject.

What is more extraordinary still, you say, " he himself contradicted his own assertion at no greater distance than the third section of the same book, where the good father," as you ironically call him, " takes quite another ground to confute his adversary." Certainly this must be thought to be *à priori* in the highest degree improbable.

I shall now consider this flagrant contradiction, by which this great man (for so all the world has ever called him) is supposed to confute himself, and so far to have lost all character, that the Archdeacon of St. Alban's would not take his evidence upon oath; and I shall recite it in your own words.

" At no greater distance than in the third section of the same book, the good father takes quite another ground to confute his adversary; he insults over his ignorance for not making the distinctions which he himself, in the allegation in question, had confounded. 'It is my present point,' says Origen, 'to evince Celsus's ignorance, who has made a Jew say to his countrymen, to Israelites believing in Christ, Upon what motive have you deserted the law of your ancestors? But how have they deserted the law of their ancestors,

who reprove those who are inattentive to it, and say, Tell me ye, &c.?' Then, after a citation of certain texts from St. Paul's epistles, in which the apostle avails himself of the authority of the law to enforce particular duties, which texts make nothing either for or against the Jew's assertion, that the christians of the circumcision had abandoned their ancient laws, but prove only that the disuse of the law, if it was actually gone into disuse, could not be deemed a desertion, because it proceeded not from any disregard to the authority of the lawgiver. After a citation of texts to this purpose, Origen proceeds in this remarkable strain. 'And how confusedly does Celsus's Jew speak upon this subject, when he might have said *more plausibly*, Some of you have relinquished the old customs upon pretence of expositions and allegories! Some again expounding, as you call it, spiritually, nevertheless observe the institutions of our ancestors. But some, not admitting these expositions, are willing to receive Jesus as the person foretold by the prophets, and to observe the law of Moses according to the ancient customs, as having in the letter the whole meaning of the spirit*.' In these words Origen confesses all that I have alleged of him. He confesses, in contradiction to his former assertion, that he knew of three sorts of Jews professing christianity; one sort adhered to the letter of the Mosaic law, rejecting all figurative interpretations; another

* Και ὡς συγκεχυμενως γε ταυθ' ὁ παρα τῳ Κελσῳ Ιουδαιος λεγει, δυναμενος πιθανωτερον ειπειν, ὁτι τινες μεν ἡμων καταλελοιπασι. τα εθη προφασει διηγησεων και αλληγοριων· τινες δε και διηγουμενοι, ὡς επαγγελλεσθε, πνευματικως, ουδεν ἡττον τα πατρια τηρειτε· τινες δε ουδε διηγουμενοι, βουλεσθε τον Ιησουν παραδεξασθαι ὡς προφητευθεντα, και τον Μωυσεως νομον τηρησαι, κατα τα πατρια· ὡς εν τη λεξει εχοντες τον παντα του πνευματος νουν. Origenis contra Celsum lib. ii. p. 59. Cantabrigiæ, 1658, 4to.

sort admitted a figurative interpretation, conforming however to the letter of the precept; but a third sort (the first in Origen's enumeration) had relinquished the observance of the literal precept, conceiving it to be of no importance in comparison of the latent figurative meaning."

This contains the whole of your curious reasoning, in which you suppose that Origen, in treating of the same subject, and in continuation of the same argument, has given you this pretence for impeaching his veracity as you have done. But surely this writer, who must have known his own meaning, could not have imagined that he had really contradicted himself in two passages, not in different works written at different times, or in distant parts of the same work (in which he might have forgotten what he had said in one of the passages, when he was writing the other), but in the same work, the same part of the work, and in paragraphs so very near to each other. And I believe nobody before yourself ever imagined that there was any contradiction in them at all.

In the former he asserts in general terms, without making any particular exception, that the Jewish christians adhered to the customs of their ancestors; and in the latter, which almost immediately follows it, he says that his adversary, who had asserted the contrary, would have said what was more *plausible* (not what was *true*) if he had said that some of them had relinquished their ancient customs, while the rest adhered to them; alluding, perhaps, to a few who had abandoned those customs, while the great body of them had not; which is sufficiently consistent with what he had said before. For inconsiderable exceptions are not regarded in ge-

neral assertions. It would have been very extraordinary indeed, if *no* Jewish christians whatever had abandoned the rites of their former religion, when in all ages some Jews, whether they became christians or not, have done so. In like manner, it concerns me not to assert that no individuals of the Jewish christians embraced the doctrine of the trinity, because my purpose is sufficiently answered if *the great body of them*, to whom the rest bore no sensible proportion, were unitarians. And though there might be a few Jewish christians who had deserted their former customs, which would have given Celsus a *plausible pretence* for making such a division of them as to make these one of the classes, yet the great body of them had not; and this was sufficient to remove the reproach which Celsus had thrown out against the Jewish christians in general.

That this was really the case, and that the great body of Jewish christians were likewise unitarians, we have the express testimony of Origen, uncontradicted, as I have shown, by himself, or any other authority whatever. He could not but be well informed with respect to the fact, his veracity was never impeached; and if he had been disposed to deny the truth, (which he had no temptation to do,) he wrote in circumstances in which his attempts to falsify could not have availed him.

But to prove Origen to be guilty of contradicting himself, is not the only use you make of the passage. You say, p. 27, "But this is not all. In the next sentence he gives us to understand, though I confess more indirectly, but he gives us to understand, that of these three sorts of Hebrews professing christianity, they

only who had laid aside the use of the Mosaic law were in his time considered as true christians." This is extraordinary indeed; but let us see *how* it is *given to be understood*. Having found so little in your clear *conclusions*, I do not expect much from your supposed *insinuations*.

"For he mentions it as a further proof of the ignorance of Celsus, pretending, as it appears he did, to deep erudition upon all subjects, that, in his account of the heresies of the christian church, he had omitted the Israelites believing in Jesus, and not laying aside the law of their ancestors. 'But how should Celsus,' he says, 'make clear distinctions upon this point, who, in the sequel of his work, mentions impious heresies altogether alienated from Christ, and others which have renounced the Creator, and has not noticed [or knew not of] Israelites believing in Jesus, and not relinquishing the law of their fathers*?' What opinion," you say, "is to be entertained of a writer's veracity, who in one page asserts that the Hebrews professing christianity had not renounced the Jewish law, and in the next affirms that a part of them had renounced it, not without an insinuation that they who had not were heretics, not true christians? EGO HUIC TESTI, ETIAM JURATO, QUI TAM MANIFESTO FUMOS VENDIT, ME NON CREDITURUM ESSE CONFIRMO."

Such is the curious inference of the learned Arch-

* Αλλα γαρ πόθεν Κελσῳ τα κατα τον τοπον τρανωσαι, ὁς και αἱρεσεων μεν αθεων. και του Ιησου παντῃ αλλοτριων εν τοις ἑξῆς εμνημονευσε, και αλλων καταλειπουσων τον δημιουργον ουκ οιδε δε και Ισραηλιτας εις Ιησουν πιστευοντας. και ου καταλειποντας τον πατριον νομον; ου γαρ προεκειτο αυτῳ φιλαληθως ὁλα τα κατα τον τοπον εξεταται, ἱν' ει τι χρησιμον εὑρισκοι παραδεξηται, αλλα και ὡς εχθρος, και ὁλος τοῦ ανατρεπειν ἁμα τῳ ακουσαι γενομενος, τα τοιαυτα ανεγραψεν. Orig. contra Cels. lib. ii. p. 59.

deacon of St. Alban's. From this construction of the passage a person might be led to think that Origen represented Celsus as having undertaken to give an account of the heresies in the christian church, and as having in that account omitted *the Israelites believing in Jesus, and not laying aside the rites of their ancestors;* and on no other ground can your insinuation stand. Whereas the most natural construction of the passage is, that Origen says, "It is no wonder that Celsus should be so ignorant of what he was treating, when he classed the Gnostics along with christians, and did not even know that there were Israelites who professed christianity, and adhered to the laws of Moses." Where then is the most distant insinuation that the *Israelites believing in Christ, and not laying aside the rites of their ancestors,* were heretics? That the Gnostics were classed with christians, was a common complaint of the orthodox in that age.

You strangely allege another instance of what you call *prevarication* in Origen, in the same book against Celsus. In the controversy with the Jews about the meaning of the word עלמה, which he contends signifies *a virgin,* he says, "The word עלמה, which the LXX have translated into the word παρθενος [a virgin], but other interpreters into the word νεανις [a young woman], is put too, AS THEY SAY, in Deuteronomy, for a virgin*."

On this you remark as follows: "What is this *as they say?* Was it unknown to the compiler of the

* Εαν δε Ιουδαιος εὑρεσιλογων, το Ιδου ἡ παρθενος μη γεγραφθαι λεγει αλλ' αντ' αυτου Ιδου ἡ νεανις· φησομεν προς αυτον, ὁτι ἡ μεν λεξις ἡ Ααλμα ἡν οἱ μεν ἑβδομηκοντα μετειληφασι προς την παρθενον, αλλοι δε εις την νεανιν, κειται ὡς φασι και εν τῳ Δευτερονομιῳ επι παρθενου οὑτως εχουσα. Orig. contra Cels. lib. i. p. 27.

Hexapla, what the reading of the Hebrew text, in his own time, was? If he knew that it was what he would have it thought to be, why does he seem to assert upon hearsay only? If he knew not, why did he not inform himself, that he might either assert with confidence what he had found upon inquiry to be true, or not assert what could not be maintained? EGO HUIC TESTI, ETIAMSI JURATO, QUI TAM MANIFESTO FUMOS VENDIT, ME NON CREDITURUM ESSE CONFIRMO."

I am astonished that any man could think this state of the case probable. The question between Origen and the Jews was not what was the word in the Hebrew, but what was the meaning of it in a particular place. But even admitting that the dispute was about the true reading in the original, what great matter was there in Origen's saying *the Jews said so*, when he knew that what they said was true? Is this a foundation on which to affirm that you would not take a man's evidence upon his oath? What an appetite must a man have for calumny, who can seize upon such a circumstance as this to gratify it!

Fœnum habet in cornu: hunc tu, Romane, caveto.

I am, &c.

LETTER II.

General Observations relating to the supposed Orthodox Church of Jewish Christians at Jerusalem after the Time of Adrian.

REV. SIR,

HAVING fully considered what you have alleged in support of your extraordinary charge of *wilful falsehood* in Origen, because the supposition of his being an honest man was inconsistent with the existence of your church of orthodox Jewish christians at Jerusalem after the time of Adrian, I shall proceed to consider the *positive evidence* that you have produced for the actual existence of such a church. But I shall, in the first place, mention some observations of a general nature relating to the subject.

That there was a christian church at Jerusalem after the time of Adrian, we all acknowledge; but you say, "the point in dispute between us is, of what members the church of Ælia was composed. He says, of converts of Gentile extraction: I say, of Hebrews, of the very same persons, in the greater part, who were members of the ancient Hebrew church at the time when the Jews were subdued by Adrian."

1. Now, that the members of this church were not Jews, but Greeks, I think indisputable from this plain consideration, that after the time of Adrian the bishops of that church were Greeks, and that the language in which the public offices were performed was Greek; whereas immediately before the bishops had been Hebrews, and the public offices had been in the Hebrew tongue,

2. If there was any considerable body of orthodox Jewish christians, it is extraordinary that no particular mention should be made of them by any ancient writer. Jerom speaks of his acquaintance with learned Ebionites by whom he was taught the Hebrew tongue. Living as he did in the country, he might as easily, on your idea, have found learned orthodox Jewish christians, with whom it would have been more agreeable to him to associate, unless you suppose that the learned Ebionites were heretics, and the unlearned orthodox.

3. As so many writers speak of Ebionites, or heterodox Nazarenes, it would surely have been natural for some of them to have added, that they were not the great body, or at least not the whole, of the Jewish christians. The mention of the one would naturally have drawn after it, on some occasion, the mention of the other. And yet no ancient writer speaks of them.

4. As to *a whole church* of orthodox Jewish christians at Jerusalem, or elsewhere, we hear of no intercourse between any such church and other orthodox churches. None of their bishops, or deputies from them, appear at any council; no appeals are ever made to them; which would have been natural, as to the mother of all the churches. This is easily accounted for, on the supposition that all the remains of the Jewish christians were the poor and despised unitarian Ebionites, residing chiefly beyond the sea of Galilee, whose numbers likewise were inconsiderable; but hard to be supposed, if there were any churches of orthodox Jewish christians residing at Jerusalem, or elsewhere.

5. If there was any considerable body of orthodox Jewish christians, why do we never hear of any Hebrew gospels besides that of Matthew? If they held the

doctrine of the orthodox gentile churches concerning the person of Christ, it is probable that they would have had the same respect for the other gospels, and the other books of the New Testament; and yet it is almost certain that they made little use of them.

By way of apology for your additions to the scanty accounts of the ancients, concerning the conquest of Jerusalem by Adrian, you say, "The ecclesiastical history of those times is so very general and imperfect, that whoever attempts to make out a consistent story from any ancient writers which are come down to us, will find himself under the necessity of helping out their broken accounts by his own conjectures."

But certainly, Sir, the *contradicting* of an ancient writer is not the way to *help out* his account of things. Now Eusebius, the oldest writer who mentions the fact, says, that after the taking of the city by Adrian, the whole nation of the Jews (παν εθνος, which excludes all distinction with respect to *religion*) were forbidden even to see the desolation of their metropolis at a distance*. To *help out this broken account*, because it does not contain all that you wish it to do, (though I see nothing *broken* in it,) you say that the Jews were allowed to remain in the place, and enjoy the privileges of the Ælian colony, on condition of their becoming christians. To help out this addition, I would further add, that another of the terms of the capitulation was, that they should from that time speak Greek, as without this they

* Και του της απονοιας αυτοις αιτιου την αξιαν εκτισαντος δικην, το παν εθνος εξ εκεινου και της περι τα Ιεροσολυμα γης παμπαν επιβαινειν ειργεται, νομου δογματι και διαταξεσιν Αδριανου ως αν μηδ' εξ αποπτου θεωροιεν το πατρωον εδαφος εγκελευσαμενου. Euseb. Eccl. Hist. lib. iv. cap. 6. edit. R. Steph. Paris. 1544. fol. 34.

could have derived no benefit from the offices of a Greek church.

Sulpitius says, that by this severity to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, Adrian thought to destroy the christian faith. But to this you oppose the authority of Orosius, (calling it, however, p. 43, but a *feather* in the scale,) that when the Jews were excluded, the christians were allowed to remain. If your liberty of *helping out a broken story* may be exercised here, I should say that, in the idea even of this writer, the *Greek* christians might remain, but the *Jewish* not. If any regard is to be paid to Eusebius, the oldest historian, or to Sulpitius, who is much more circumstantial than Orosius, and on that account better entitled to credit, no Jews, christians or others, were allowed to remain in the place.

To make your account the more probable, you say, p. 44, "It is a notorious fact that Adrian was not unfavourable to the christians, and that the church in his reign obtained a respite from persecution." But how far did this favour to christians extend? You say, "the fury of their persecutors was restrained by the imperial rescripts to the provincial governors, who were directed not to proceed against the christians, except by way of regular trial, upon the allegation of some certain crime, and, when nothing more was alleged than the bare name of christianity, to punish the informer as a sycophant." That is, as the history of those times enables us to interpret it, they were not to be punished as christians till they were proved to be so, which was the case in the reign of Trajan; but does not amount to a toleration of the Jews at Jerusalem, on condition of their embracing christianity.

Your favourite Mosheim says (Hist. vol. i. p. 128.) that what was done by Adrian (in whose reign the persecution of christians had raged with peculiar violence) was a solemn renewal of the law of Trajan. In the reign of Antoninus Pius, but not before, it was ordered, that a man being proved to be a christian should not be deemed sufficient for his condemnation, unless he was also proved to have been guilty of some crime against the state. There is, therefore, little reason to think that Adrian was so well disposed towards christianity, as to permit the rebellious Jews to remain in Jerusalem on condition of their embracing it.

I am, &c.

LETTER III.

Of the Testimony of Epiphanius to the Existence of a Church of Orthodox Jewish Christians at Jerusalem after the Time of Adrian.

REV. SIR,

AFTER the preliminary observations contained in the preceding letter, I shall now consider the testimony that you have produced from Epiphanius.

You say, p. 46, that "the *fact* (viz. of the return of the Jews from Pella to Jerusalem after the wars of Adrian) of which Dr. Priestley has done me the honour to make me the inventor, is asserted by Epiphanius.—The confidence," you add, "with which he mentions this as a fact forged by me, is only one instance out of

a great number of his own shameless intrepidity in assertion."

If, Sir, you wish to reclaim a person, you should never deprive him of *all* character, but should leave him a *little*, a small root, from which *more* may afterwards spring. Having now no character to lose, being capable of asserting any thing, true or false, that is likely to answer my purpose, I will, "with the most shameless intrepidity," assert that Epiphanius mentions no such *fact* as you so very confidently suppose him to have done. After carefully examining the passage which you have produced, I do maintain that in it he makes no mention whatever of any return of christian Jews from Pella, besides that which took place after the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus, and not at all of any return after the destruction by Adrian. This is most evident from attending to the very next sentence which follows the words that you have quoted. The whole passage is as follows:

After mentioning Aquila, as appointed by Adrian the inspector of his works at Ælia, Epiphanius gives the following history of him:—"Aquila, living at Jerusalem, and seeing the disciples of the disciples of the apostles flourishing in the faith, and working great miracles, especially of healing, (for they had returned from the city of Pella to Jerusalem, and taught there. For when the city was about to be taken by the Romans, all the disciples had been forewarned by an angel to leave the city, which was devoted to destruction. These, leaving it, went and dwelt in the above-mentioned Pella, beyond Jordan, one of those that were called Decapolis; but, returning after the desolation of

Jerusalem, as I have said, worked miracles.) Aquila therefore, being convinced, became a christian, and, after some time, requesting the seal of christianity [viz. baptism], obtained it*."

What can be more evident, than that the return of the Jewish christians from Pella, mentioned in this passage by Epiphanius, is that return which followed the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus? For he speaks of their having left that city, antecedent to *this return* to it, in consequence of being warned by an angel so to do; which was said to be the case before the destruction by Titus, but never before that by Adrian; and it was by the disciples of those who then returned that Aquila was converted to christianity; which was probably a considerable time before the destruction of the Jews by Adrian.

After the imperfect quotation of the passage of which I have given the entire translation, you have the assurance to add, "Whether this return of the christians of Jerusalem from Pella took place in the interval between the end of Titus's war and the commencement of Adrian's, or after the end of Adrian's, is a matter of no importance. It is sufficient for my pur-

* Ὁ τοιυυν Ακυλας, διαγων εν τῃ Ἱερουσαλημ, και ὁρων τους μαθητας των μαθητων των αποστολων ανθουντας τῃ πιστει, και σημεια μεγαλα εργαζομενους, ιασεων και αλλων θαυματων. ησαν γαρ ὑποστρεψαντες απο Πελλης της πολεως εις Ἱερουσαλημ, και διδασκοντες, ἡνικα γαρ ημελλεν ἡ πολις ἁλισκεσθαι ὑπο των Ῥωμαιων, προεχρηματισθησαν ὑπο αγγελου, παντες οἱ μαθηται μεταστηναι απο της πολεως μελλουσης αρδην απολλυσθαι· οἱ τινες και μεταναστα γενομενοι, ᾠκησαν εν Πελλῃ τῃ προγεγραμμενῃ πολει, περαν του Ἰορδανου, ἡτις εκ Δεκαπολεως λεγεται ειναι. μετα δε την ερημωσιν Ἱερουσαλημ αποστρεψαντες, ὡς εφην, σημεια μεγαλα επετελουν. Ὁ ουν Ακυλας κατανυγεις την διανοιαν, τῳ χριστιανισμῳ επιστευσεν. αιτησας δε μετα χρονον την εν Χριστῳ σφραγιδα, εκομισατο. De Mensuris et Ponderibus, Epiphanii Opera, vol. ii. p. 171. Paris. 1622.

pose that these returned christians were residing at Jerusalem, or more properly at Ælia, at the same time that Aquila was residing there as overseer of the emperor's works. Let not the public be abused by any cavils which ignorance or fraud may raise about the chronology of the return."

But certainly it must be of consequence to know, whether Aquila was residing at Jerusalem after the destruction of that city by Adrian; and this is more than Epiphanius says, or is at all probable in itself. For the rebuilding of Jerusalem by Adrian, in which Aquila was employed by him, was undertaken in the 18th year of his reign, a year before the revolt of the Jews; and it was not till the 18th of Adrian that they were entirely subdued.

According to Epiphanius, Aquila, after his conversion to christianity by the descendants of the Jewish christians who were returned from Pella, (retaining his former practices,) was excommunicated by them. After this he became a Jew, and, applying himself to the study of the scriptures, made a translation of them into Greek. This translation Cave supposes to have been made A. D. 128 or 129, the 11th or 12th of Adrian. His conversion to christianity, therefore, was probably prior to the reign of Adrian: and yet that is the only circumstance that proves any intercourse he ever had with Jewish christians returned from Pella. On which side then is *the ignorance*, I say nothing of *the fraud*, of which you suspect me in this business? You must, Sir, dig deeper than you have yet done, for the foundation of this favourite church.

I am, &c.

LETTER IV.

Of the Evidence from Jerom in favour of the Existence of a Church of Orthodox Jewish Christians at Jerusalem after the Time of Adrian.

REV. SIR,

I COME now to the two passages which you have quoted from Jerom. That on which you lay the greatest stress you introduce in the following manner. "But I give him Origen:" "I will rest the credit of my seventh position upon the mention which occurs in Jerom's Commentary upon Isaiah, of *Hebrews believing in Christ*, as distinct from the *Nazarenes*. Jerom relates two different expositions of the prophecy concerning Zabulon and Naphtali, delivered in the beginning of the 9th chapter of Isaiah, of which expositions he ascribes the one to the *Hebrews believing in Christ*, the other to the *Nazarenes*. The character given of these Hebrews, that they *believed in Christ*, without any thing to distinguish their belief from the common belief of the church, without any note of its error or imperfection, is a plain character of complete orthodoxy."

It is somewhat remarkable, that having before maintained that those whom Jerom called *Nazarenes*, in his epistle to Austin, were *orthodox christians*, you should now allow that, by the same term, he here means *heretics*; and that the phrase *believing in Christ* should now be a character of *complete orthodoxy*, when in that epistle it is predicated of the heretical Ebionites. What clue can we have to any man's meaning, if he be sup-

posed to use terms in such different and even opposite senses? When neither himself nor any other writer ever says that there *were* two such very different kinds of Nazarenes, what right can you have to assert that there were?

The passage in Jerom on which though you lay so much stress, you do not quote, is as follows. In his interpretation of Isaiah ix. 14, (cited in Matt. iv. 6,) he says, "Galilee of the Gentiles Aquila translates ϑινας of the Gentiles, and Symmachus *the boundaries* of the Gentiles. By ϑινας we understand heaps of sand on sea coasts or shores. The Hebrews believing in Christ interpret the passage in this manner. At first these two tribes, Zabulon and Naphtali, were taken by the Assyrians, and carried into their enemies' country, and Galilee was destroyed; which the prophet now says was relieved because he bore the sins of the people. But afterwards not only the two tribes, but the rest that dwelled beyond Jordan, in Samaria, were carried captive. And this they say the scripture now declares, that the country whose people were first carried captive, and began to serve the Babylonians, and which was first involved in the darkness of error, was the first to see the light of Christ preaching to them, and from it the gospel was preached to all other nations. The Nazarenes, *whose opinion I have given above*, thus endeavour to explain the passage. Christ coming, and his preaching shining forth, in the first place the country of Zabulon and Naphtalim, being delivered from the error of the Scribes and Pharisees, shook from their necks the heavy yoke of Jewish traditions; but afterwards, by the preaching of the apostle Paul, who was the last of the apostles, the preaching was increased,

or multiplied, and the gospel of Christ shone to the utmost boundaries of the Gentiles, and of the ocean. Then all the world, which before walked, or sat, in darkness, and was held in the chains of idolatry and death, saw the clear light of the gospel*."

Before you can show that this passage, on which you lay so much stress, is at all to your purpose, you must prove the three following things. First, that the *Hebrews believing in Christ* were different from the *Nazarenes*. Secondly, that the former were completely orthodox; and thirdly, that those orthodox Jewish christians resided at Jerusalem. And it appears to me that not one of these suppositions is at all probable.

That by *Nazarenes* Jerom did not intend any other than the *Hebrews believing in Christ*, but only meant

* Pro *Galilea Gentium* Aquila ϑινας gentium, Symmachus, terminos gentium interpretati sunt: ϑινας autem tumulos intelligimus arenarum, qui vel in littoribus vel in ripis sunt. Hebræi credentes in Christum hunc locum ita edisserunt. Primo tempore hæ duæ tribus Zabulon et Nephtalim ab Assyriis captæ sunt et ductæ in hostilem terram, et Galilæa deserta est, quam nunc propheta dicit alleviatam esse, eo quod peccata populi sustineret. Postea autem non solum duæ tribus, sed et reliquæ quæ habitabant trans Jordanem in Samaria, ductæ sunt in captivitatem. Et hoc, inquiunt, scriptura nunc dicit, quod regii cujus populus primus ductus est in captivitatem et Babiloniis servire cœpit, et quæ prius in tenebris versabatur erroris, ipse primum lucem prædicantis viderit Christi, et ex ea in universas gentes sit evangelium seminatum. Nazaræi, quorum opinionem supra posui, hunc locum ita explanare conantur. Adveniente Christo, et prædicatione illius coruscante, prima terra Zabulon et terra Nephtalim scribarum et pharisæorum est erroribus liberata, et gravissimum traditionum Judaicarum jugum excussit de cervicibus suis. Postea autem per evangelium apostoli Pauli, qui novissimus apostolorum omnium fuit, ingravata est, *i. e.* multiplicata prædicatio, et in terminos gentium et viam universi maris Christi evangelium splenduit. Denique omnis orbis, qui ante ambulabat vel sedebat in tenebris, et idololatriæ ac mortis vinculis tenebatur, clarum evangelicum lumen aspexit. Opera, vol. iv. p. 33.

to vary his mode of expression, is probable from this consideration; that, after giving a translation of the passage by Aquila and Symmachus, both Ebionites, he speaks of the interpretation of the prophecy by the Hebrew christians in general, and then says, the Nazarenes, *whose opinion he had given above*, explained or illustrated it in the manner that has been represented. The opinion to which he referred, *as given above*, was therefore, probably, that of *the Hebrews believing in Christ*. And the explanations of the passage are not at all *different* from one another, but the latter a further illustration of the former; the one being an interpretation of the prophecy, and the latter a more particular application of it to the time of Christ and the gospel.

This passage, therefore, which you have quoted as decisively in your favour, instead of proving that the *Hebrews believing in Christ* were different from the *Nazarenes*, furnishes an additional argument that, in the idea of Jerom, they were the very same people; if it does not also prove that their opinions were the same with those of Aquila and Symmachus, or of the Ebionites.

You may indeed say that the opinion of the Nazarenes, to which Jerom refers, *as given above*, was that account of the Nazarenes which is found in his commentary on the preceding chapter, viz. "their so receiving Christ as not to abandon the old law." But the remoteness of the passage, and its having no relation to the subject of which he is treating in his commentary on the ninth chapter, make it improbable.

2. Admitting that Jerom alluded to some difference between the *Hebrews believing in Christ* and *the Nazarenes*, it is far from following that the former were

completely orthodox, and the latter not. For the phrase *believing in Christ* is applied both by Origen and Jerom to the heretical Jewish christians. His not expressly saying that they were *heretics* in this place, on which you lay so much stress, can never prove that they were *completely orthodox*; since their heresy had nothing to do with the subject of which Jerom is here treating.

All the difference between these two descriptions of Jewish christians that Jerom *can* be supposed to allude to, is such a one as Origen made, of two sorts of Ebionites, viz. one who believed the miraculous conception, and the other who disbelieved it; or that of Justin, viz. of those who would hold communion with the gentile christians, and those who would not.

"It must strike the learned reader," you say, "that the Nazarenes mentioned by St. Jerom in the passage to which I now refer, of his annotations on Isaiah, must have been a different people from those mentioned by him with such contempt in his epistle to St. Austin, and described by Epiphanius. The Nazarenes here mentioned by St. Jerom held the Scribes and Pharisees in detestation, their traditions in contempt, and the apostle St. Paul in high veneration." Now I see no intimation in this passage of there being any other kinds of Nazarenes, or Jewish christians, besides such as Paul found at Jerusalem in his last journey thither, the more intelligent of them being his friends, and rejoicing in the success of his preaching. But even his greatest enemies must have admitted that the knowledge of christianity was extended by his means; which is all that Jerom says of the Nazarenes in this place. As to the traditions of the Scribes and Pharisees, we

read of no Jewish christians who did not hold them in contempt.

3. Allowing both that the *Hebrews believing in Christ* and the *Nazarenes* were different people, and that the former were completely orthodox, it will not follow that there was a church of them at Jerusalem; which is the thing that you contend for.

"On these foundations," however, you say, "which a stronger arm than Dr. Priestley's shall not be able to tear up, stands the church of orthodox Jewish christians at Jerusalem, to which the assertors of the catholic faith will not scruple to appeal in proof of the antiquity of their doctrine, whatever offence the very mention of the orthodox church at Jerusalem may give to the enraged Heresiarch."

Alas! these *new foundations*, being like the former built upon the sand, are also completely swept away. I will add, that he must be a bolder man than he that rebuilt Jericho, who shall attempt to restore them.

But this is not the only passage in Jerom to which you appeal. You also say, that "he mentions Nazarenes who held the doctrine of our Lord's divinity. For by an exposition of Isaiah viii. 13, 14, which St. Jerom ascribes to them, it appears that they acknowledged in Christ the יהוה צבאות [the Lord of Hosts] of the Old Testament." For any thing like a shadow of a proof of this most extraordinary assertion, I a long time looked in vain, and thought the reference must have been misprinted; but at length, considering what kind of a reasoner I had to do with, I believe I discovered your real ideas on the subject.

The prophet says, (ch. viii. 13, 14.) *Sanctify the Lord of Hosts himself, and let him be your fear, and*

let him be your dread; and he shall be for a sanctuary; but for a stone of stumbling, and for a rock of offence, to both the houses of Israel, for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

In his commentary on this passage, Jerom says, "the Nazarenes (who so received Christ as not to abandon the observance of the old law) interpret these two houses of Sammai and Hillel, from which arose the Scribes and Pharisees, &c. and that these were the *two houses* which did not receive the Saviour, who was to them for a destruction and an offence*."

Jerom, however, does not make the inference that you do, viz. that because the Nazarenes thought that this prophecy referred to the times of Christ, and to his rejection by the Scribes and Pharisees, they believed Christ to be the *Lord of Hosts*. They only call him *the Saviour*, meaning, probably, a person speaking and acting by authority from God, who was in reality rejected by those who rejected his messenger, though a *mere man*. As our Lord himself says, Luke x. 6, *He that despiseth you despiseth me; and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me*. On this ground you might rank both the Nazarenes and all the modern professed unitarians with believers in the divinity of

* Duas domus Nazarei (qui ita Christum recipiunt ut observationes legis veteris non amittant) duas familias interpretantur Samai et Hillel, ex quibus orti sunt scribæ et pharisæi, quorum suscepit scholam Axibas, quem magistrum Aquilæ proseliti autumant, et post eum Meir; cui successit Johannen, filius Zacharæi, et post eum Eliezer, et per ordinem Delphon, et rursum Joseph Galilæus, et usque ad captivitatem Hierusalem Josue. Samai igitur et Hillel, non multo prius quam dominus nasceretur orti sunt in Judæa, quorum prior *dissipator* interpretatur, sequens *prophanus*; eo quod per traditiones et δευτερωσεις suas, legis præcepta dissipaverint atque maculaverint. Et has esse *duas domus*, quæ salvatorem non receperint, qui factus sit eis in ruinam et in scandalum. Opera, vol. iv. p. 32.

Christ. You might even make them believers in the divinity of the apostles, and that of all the preachers of the gospel. But having no better evidence of the orthodoxy of the Nazarenes, you were obliged to make the best of this; which will prove a great deal too much.

I wonder, however, that this mode of interpreting scripture does not stagger even yourself. I thought that the most orthodox of the present day had believed that the person characterized by the title of *the Lord of Hosts* had been not *the Son* but *the Father*. If the *Lord*, i. e. *Jehovah*, *of Hosts*, which is no doubt synonymous to *Jehovah* absolutely so called, be *the Son*, it will be difficult to find *the Father* any where in the Old Testament.

Thus I have considered all the evidence, positive or presumptive, that you have produced for the existence of a church of orthodox Jewish christians at Jerusalem after the time of Adrian. I have particularly considered your five *quotations* from ancient writers, and do not find that so much as one of them is at all to your purpose.

Thus again ends this church of orthodox Jewish christians at Jerusalem, planted by Mosheim, and destroyed by the too copious watering of the Archdeacon of St. Alban's.

I am, &c.

LETTER V.

Of the Miraculous Conception.

REV. SIR,

YOUR Sermon on the Incarnation ought to be considered as making part of our controversy; and indeed it might with more propriety have been entitled a Discourse against myself, as you have contrived to introduce into it reflections on every opinion that I have at any time advanced, that you could think would make me appear in an obnoxious light. But for this I am not sorry; because the more those opinions are kept in view, the sooner will the horror they at first inspire go off. In time mankind will be less offended at them, and may come to approve what they now dislike. As to mere *abuse*, in which light only those reflections can be considered as they appear in this Sermon, I think my *time*, and even my *ink*, of too much value to be thrown away in answering it.

As to the *miraculous conception*, to which your Sermon chiefly relates, I do not pretend to make myself a party for or against it, having only endeavoured to supply materials for forming a right judgement in the case. But I cannot help observing that, instead of new *light*, you have thrown upon it a great mass of additional *darkness*, and of a deeper shade than any thing that has been produced by the christian fathers, at least till long after the council of Nice.

With respect to the *importance* of the doctrine, you say, that, "as an article of the christian faith, it is evidently the foundation of the whole distinction between

the character of Christ, in the condition of a man, and that of any other prophet. Had the conception of Jesus been in the natural way, had he been the fruit of Mary's marriage with her husband, his intercourse with the Deity could have been of no other kind than the nature of any other man might have equally admitted, ——and how it should differ, otherwise than in the degree of frequency and intimacy, it will not be easy to explain, unless we adhere to the faith transmitted to us from the primitive ages, and believe that the eternal word, who was in the beginning with God, and was God, so joined to himself the holy thing which was formed in Mary's womb, that the two natures, from the commencement of the virgin's conception, made one person——Jesus, according to the primitive doctrine, was so united to the ever-living word, that the very existence of the man consisted in this union."

"It was," you say, "clearly the doctrine of holy writ, and nothing else, which the fathers asserted, in terms borrowed from the schools of philosophy, when they affirmed that the very principle of personality and individual existence in Mary's son was union with the uncreated word. A doctrine in which the miraculous conception would have been implied, had the thing not been recorded; since a man conceived in the ordinary way would have derived the principles of his existence from the mere physical powers of generation. Union with the divine nature could not have been the principle of an existence physically derived from Adam; and that intimate union of God and man in the Redeemer's person, which the scriptures so clearly assert, had been a physical impossibility."

You add, "On the other hand, it were not difficult

to show that the miraculous conception, once admitted, naturally brings up after it the great doctrines of the atonement and the incarnation."

To these uncouth assertions, expressed in language utterly unintelligible, and equally unwarranted by scripture or reason, I shall make no particular reply. *He that can receive them, let him receive them.* I shall only observe, in general, that if I should profess myself an opponent of the doctrine of the miraculous conception, I could not wish for a fuller refutation of it, than your being able to prove that these very absurd doctrines do, as you say, necessarily depend upon it. I shall add, that if Christ had so extraordinary a communication with God, in consequence of his having no father, what must have been the case with Adam, who had neither father nor mother?

When you shall see what I have advanced on this subject in the fourth volume of my History of early Opinions concerning Christ, you will be better qualified to write about it than you were at the time of composing this Sermon. This History you ironically call my GREAT WORK, printing it twice in capitals. This work, which is now before the public, and may be in your hands, you are welcome to treat ironically or seriously as you please. But you will lead many of your readers to conclude that I had myself called it a *great work*, whereas I do not recollect that I have any where called it more than a *large work*, which does not imply so much vanity as you ascribe to me. If that work should stand its ground against the fierce attacks of the Archdeacon of St. Alban's, the learned Professor of Arabic at Oxford, the more learned Mr. Howes of Norwich, and the other learned or-

thodox divines at home and abroad, whose animadversions it openly challenges, it may deserve a more honourable epithet than I have yet given it. At present it is only a candidate for the approbation of those who are proper judges of its merit.

I am, &c.

LETTER VI.

Miscellaneous Articles.

REV. SIR,

WERE I disposed to indulge myself in noticing all the strange positions and inconclusive reasonings with which your Remarks abound, I should make a much larger work than I fear my readers would care to *look through*. Having, therefore, abundantly refuted every thing on which you yourself pretend to lay the most stress, I shall be very short in my remarks on other things, to which, however, you strongly solicit my attention.

I.

As to my construction of *the passage in Athanasius*, we are sufficiently come to an issue. I am fully satisfied with what I have advanced in support of it, and have nothing to add; and, contemptuously as you treat it, I should not feel myself disposed to distrust it on that account, even if I had not the concurrence of such names as Beausobre and Dr. Lardner in my favour. I do not know that you can produce the name of any writer whatever in favour of your interpretation.

II.

With respect to *the passages from Chrysostom*, you will find in my *larger work* (if you should condescend to look into such a quantity of *unfinished literature)* that your construction of his meaning is contradicted by himself. You yourself, however, acknowledge all that I want, when you say, "the apostles first taught what was easiest to be learned, and went on to higher points, as the minds of their catechumens became able to bear them." For, in reality, it makes no difference from whatever *motive* it was that the apostles did not choose to teach the doctrine of Christ's divinity, or of the trinity. If christians were not *taught* those doctrines, they could not *know* them, and consequently they must have been unitarians, till they were instructed in them; and this, as all the fathers say, was not till the publication of the gospel of John.

The learned and judicious Mr. Basnage, though a trinitarian, very frankly acknowledges that Christ found the Jews in utter ignorance of the divinity of their Messiah, that his object was, "to accustom them insensibly to a mystery so much above their reason, and foreseeing that the church would revolt against it." Chrysostom, he says, has succeeded in maintaining this. Hist. des Juifs, l. v. cap. ix. s. 3.

III.

You are pleased to ridicule my *Logic*, as confounding *being*, *substance*, and *substratum*, and you find me "unapprised of that great principle, without which a logician will handle his tools but awkwardly, that the genus cannot be predicated of the specific differences."

I cannot tell where you learned this curious logic, with which I acknowledge I am utterly unacquainted; and I imagine it is equally unknown to common sense. For, according to it, since *men* are divided into *Whites* and *Blacks*, &c. &c. and the Whites may be subdivided into those of Europe and Asia, &c. and the Blacks into the Negroes of Africa, and other distinct species in other parts of the world, it would follow, that it cannot with propriety be said of any particular Whites or Blacks, that they are *men*, and it would be still less proper to say that they are *animals* or *creatures*, and least of all that they are *beings*, that is, that they have any existence at all. However, it is unusually modest in you, to allow that even *great men* have fallen into the same error with myself, "in supposing that *being* is an universal genus, under which all other genera rank as species." I am content to class with these great men, greater, as you say, than myself.

IV.

I am particularly amused with your account of *the dissenters* in this country, with whom it may be presumed that I am better acquainted than you are. And yet, in contradiction to what I asserted, and to what I am confident every dissenting minister, of any denomination whatever, will acknowledge to be true, you largely maintain that "Calvinism is almost extinguished among us." However, I the less wonder at your ignorance of *ancient sects* when you so peremptorily decide with respect to *modern ones*, arguing on the most fallacious principles, and neglecting, or despising, the surest and the most easily accessible sources of information. I sincerely wish that the *rational dis-*

senters were more numerous than they are; but the smallness of their number, compared to that of the Calvinistic dissenters, is a clear proof of the truth of my general maxim, that great bodies do not soon change their opinions; and that maxim affords the strongest presumption that the body of christians, having, according to the acknowledgement of all the fathers, been at first unitarians, could not soon become trinitarians. Accordingly, there are the clearest indications that, in fact, they continued to be unitarians for several centuries.

V.

You have taken great but unnecessary pains to prove that the places in which Mr. Lindsey and myself officiate are properly *conventicles*, because we who preach in them are not authorized by law. It is a matter of little consequence by what name they are called, since, even in the worst and most obnoxious sense of the term, as *places unauthorized by law*, the apostles generally preached in conventicles.

I should think, however, that if, by any accident, an unauthorized dissenting minister, like myself, should preach in a *parish church*, it would not, on that account, become *a conventicle*, and require reconsecration. And if not, neither does the building in which I officiate, being licensed according to law, and therefore *in itself* no conventicle, become one in consequence of my preaching in it.

VI.

You have a whole chapter *on the general spirit of my controversial writings*, in which you take much

pains to exhibit me as a man whose designs are hostile to my country, and who has no pretension to the character of a *good christian*, or a *good subject*. I rejoice that I am reproached on this account, as I am conscious that it is unmerited, and shall only observe, that the same things, and on the very same grounds, were said of Luther, and may be said of any man who shall endeavour to reform any thing that he finds established in the country in which he is born. For it is impossible that any man should wish for a new and better state of things, without wishing for an alteration of the old and worse state; and if he may on this account be denominated an enemy to the country in which that old and worst state prevails, a physician must, on the same principle, be deemed the enemy of his patient, whose disorders he wishes to cure, and especially if, in order to it, he has recourse to unpleasing remedies.

At the same time that you profess the greatest moderation, you cannot conceal your secret wishes for the interference of some *aid from a foreign quarter*. You say, indeed, "Whatever Dr. Priestley may affect to think of the intolerance of churchmen in general, or of the Archdeacon of St. Alban's in particular, a churchman lives not in the present age so weak, who would not in policy, if not in love, discourage rather than promote any thing that might be called *a persecution* of the unitarian blasphemy, in the person of Dr. Priestley, or of any of his admirers. A churchman lives not so weak as not to know, that persecution is the hot-bed in which nonsense and impiety have ever thrived." I wish, Sir, I could persuade myself that this was true. For there certainly are some very weak

churchmen, who, having less confidence in the force of *argument* than you have, may be alarmed too soon, and cry, *The church is in danger*; in which case you would yourself think the interference of *civil power* very proper.

Confiding, however, in the good sense and moderation of my countrymen in general, though not in that of the clergy in particular, I shall persist in using that liberty which the laws *ought* to give me. Unitarianism has flourished very well, as you allow, in persecution. Let the experiment be fairly made, and we shall see whether it will not flourish as well in that state of perfect freedom which the generous temper of the times gives us.

In a spirit very different from the general professions quoted above, you cannot forbear to insinuate that my designs are truly alarming to the State, and say, "If Dr. Priestley ever should attempt to execute the smallest part of what he would now be understood to threaten, it may then be expedient that the magistrate should show that he beareth not the sword in vain."

You say, "Let us trust for the present, as we securely may, to the trade of the good town of Birmingham, and to the wise connivance of the magistrate, (who watches, no doubt, while he deems it politic to wink,) to nip Dr. Priestley's goodly projects in the bud; which nothing would be so likely to ripen to a dangerous effect, as constraint excessively or unseasonably used. Thanks, however, are due to him from all lovers of their country, for the mischief which he wants not the inclination to do, if he could find the means of doing it. In gratitude's estimation the will is ever to be taken for the deed." What is this but saying that

it would be wise and right to nip my projects even in the bud, if there was any prospect of my succeeding in them? And what could a Bonner or a Gardiner say more? They would never have burned men alive, if it had not been to prevent what they thought to be *mischief*. Indeed, Sir, you do not know what spirit you are of.

But my projects are more than in the bud. I am at this very time actually executing all that I would be understood to threaten, or ever have threatened. I am endeavouring by all the means in my power to rouse the attention of thinking men in this country to the corrupt state of the religion that is established in it, and especially to convince them of the mischievous tendency of worshipping Christ as a God, when christianity disclaims all knowledge of any other God than one, and that *the God and Father of Christ*; being confident that when this is effected, (and towards this considerable progress is visibly making every day, and it has met with no obstruction since the commencement of this controversy,) not only will the present forms of trinitarian worship be abolished, but my countrymen will then thank me and my friends for what we may have contributed towards so glorious a *revolution*. Till this be actually effected, you will naturally call our attempts *rebellious*. In the mean time, convince our governors, if you can, that the country will suffer in its wealth, population, power, &c. &c. by the people becoming unitarians.

Whatever you may insinuate to the contrary, the real nature and full extent of my views (which I carry on in obedience to a greater power than any in this world) might easily be seen by yourself, especially in

my late Observations on Freedom of Inquiry in Matters of Religion. There you might also have seen that the dreadful *engine*, by means of which I hope to accomplish my dangerous designs, is *free discussion* or *controversy*,—an obstinate controversy—in which much *rest*, but I hope no *lives*, will be lost—much *ink*, but no *blood*, will be spilt; and in this I consider the Archdeacon of St. Alban's, Mr. White, Mr. Howes, and all my opponents, as my *coadjutors*; for without such *concurrence* no *controversy* could be carried on. But "the weapons of our warfare are not carnal."

To yourself, Sir, in particular, the world is indebted for whatever there may be of value in my large History of early Opinions concerning Christ. For without the link that you put into the chain of *causes* and *effects*, mechanically operating in my mind, the very idea of that work would not, I believe, have occurred to me. And I trust that a fire still more destructive to error and superstition, and consequently to all the ecclesiastical establishments in the world, which are built upon and promote them, will be raised by the concurrence of your seasonable pains in blowing up the flame of this controversy; which will not, I trust, be extinguished till its end be effectually answered.

Lest you should again relapse into your criminal indolence of *eighteen months*, consider that the great danger on which you, Sir, first sounded the alarm (and Mr. White has sounded the horn of battle still louder) is now more threatening than ever. I hope that you and your brethren will never drop the spirit which breathed in your famous Charge to the Archdeaconry of St. Alban's. Lest you should remit of

your ardour, I shall here recite one paragraph from it.

"The restless spirit of scepticism will suggest difficulties in the system, and create doubts about the particulars of the christian doctrine: difficulties *must* be removed, and doubts *must* be satisfied. But above all, the scruples *must* be composed which the refinements of a false philosophy, patronized as they are in the present age by men no less amiable for the general purity of their manners, than distinguished by their scientific attainments, will be too apt to raise in the minds of their weaker brethren. And this is the service to which they, whom the indulgence of Providence hath released from the more laborious office of the priesthood, stand peculiarly engaged. To them their more occupied brethren have a right to look up in these emergencies for support and succour in the common cause. It is for them to stand forth the champions of the common faith, and the advocates of their order. It is for them to wipe off the aspersion injuriously cast upon the sons of the Establishment, as uninformed in the true grounds of the doctrine which they teach, or insincere in the belief of it. To this duty they are indispensably obliged by their providential exemption from work of a harder kind. It is the proper business of the station which is allotted them in Christ's household. And deep will be their shame, and insupportable their punishment, if, in the great day of reckoning, it should appear that they have received the wages of a service which hath never been performed."

If Sir, you read the above as often as you ought to do, you will never in this very critical situation, when

the enemy is at every gate, and scaling every rampart of your old and ruinous fortress, indulge yourself in your *soft couch of preferment*, but, together with your brethren, exert yourself *pro aris et focis*.

VII.

You say, that, "as you consider this controversy as resembling a state of war, in which no quarter is to be given or accepted, you think yourself at liberty to strike at your enemy without remorse, in whatever quarter you may perceive an opening." This fell language may well make me shudder at my situation, especially as in my *large work*, at this very time probably in your cruel and remorseless hands, there must be many openings, and your vigilance in discovering them cannot be doubted. I trust, however, that though you may draw *blood* in many places, you will not be able to reach any vital part. Out of eighteen hundred references, I will gladly compound for eighteen being found defective, when, of no more than *five* in this performance of yours, not one proves to be to your purpose.

As you have apprized me of your resolution to strike at me without remorse, wherever you can find an opening, I may presume that the parts at which you have aimed your *remorseless blows* are all that you thought vulnerable. But, Sir, you are not skilful in the art of tormenting, and, like the Indian warrior, I will teach you how you might wound me much more deeply.

Your chief wish is evidently to represent me as an enemy to the civil and ecclesiastical constitution of this country. Now had you been better *redde* in my writings (but they are happily too voluminous for you to

look through) you might have found passages more to your purpose than any that you have selected. You have gone back as far as the year 1769; but you have overlooked the Sermon which I preached on resigning my pastoral office at Leeds, in 1773, one paragraph from which I shall insert for your use on another occasion.

"All who are interested in the support of these anti-christian establishments, which usurp an undue authority over the consciences of men, and whose wealth and power are advanced by them, are *at this very time* in a state of general consternation, both at home and abroad; seeing their principles and maxims universally decried, and their unjust claims assailed from a great variety of quarters, so that *their kingdom is* now *full of darkness, and they are gnawing their tongues for pain*, but *without repenting of their deeds.*" Rev. xvi. 10, &c. &c. &c.

VIII.

As you talk of "culling the flowers of my composition," I shall, in return, present you with some of your own. If they please so much when separate, what must be their beauty and fragrance when united!

"Insufficient antagonist; confident ignorance, fiery resentment, violent invective, and fierceness of wrath; incompetency in the subject, fraudulent trick, meant to be put upon the public, but not on Dr. Horsley; unfinished erudition, shallow criticism, weak argument, unjustifiable art to cover the weakness and supply the want of argument; the vain indignant struggle of a strong animal which feels itself overcome, the mere

growling of the tiger in the toils; a never to be forgotten attempt upon a passage in St. John's first epistle *; a professor of Greek, unqualified to teach the elements of that language; a false and fraudulent representation of an argument; precipitance in assertion, and talent in accommodating his story to his opinion; one instance out of a great number, of his shameless intrepidity in assertion; enraged heresiarch; prudence in not yet declaring his antipathy to the civil as well as ecclesiastical constitution of this country; declaiming in his conventicle to enlighten the minds and excite the zeal of the mechanics of the populous town of Birmingham; the excessive admiration in which I hold myself; unjust claim to the titles of a good christian, or good subject, &c. &c. &c."

In connexion with this, let the reader now see what you say in other passages: "If on any branch of christian duty my conscience be at perfect ease, the precept *Judge not* is that which I trust I have not transgressed;" and, "From my youth up, I have been averse to censorious judgement." Who then, Sir, can deny that an excess of meekness and moderation forms the leading feature in your character?

Having taken from me every moral quality, all knowledge of human nature, history, logic, and every thing requisite to qualify me for the controversy in which I have had the presumption to engage, together with

* Referring to a supposed attempt to impose upon my readers, by a false quotation of the common English version of the Bible. A man really capable of *this* could only be fit for Bedlam or Tyburn; and yet Dr. Horsley, in the very publication in which he advanced that charge, said my "virtues were great and amiable;" as evident a contradiction as the doctrine of *transubstantiation* or *the trinity*. But as *these* have been believed, so may the other.

the very elements of the Greek language, and even of Latin, I think myself happy that, having asserted your own right to all virtue, and all knowledge, you have not yet expressly denied my ability to write a little tolerably intelligible English, and I shall endeavour to make the best use that I can of it, before the fatal day shall come when I may be stripped of *this* also.

But, dropping this style, I must on one subject be a little serious with you. You say that I have charged you with *gross and wilful misrepresentation*. This I deny; and if I have inadvertently said any thing that implies as much, I shall publicly ask your pardon. I must, therefore, insist upon your making good this accusation. You repeatedly charge *me* with wilful misrepresentation; but I doubt not you really believe me to be that fraudulent and base character, which alone is capable of such conduct, and therefore you say no worse of me than you really believe. I do not think so ill of you, and therefore I do not use that language in speaking of you. I have, indeed, called you *a falsifier of history*, because you have added, and (as you now acknowledge) *knew* that you added, to the accounts of ancient historians. But then you really believed that the transactions passed as you related them, and that the particulars which you *added* had been *omitted* by the early writers. This is far short of a *wilful lie*. After what I had written on this subject, in my eighteenth letter to you, I am surprised that you should write as you do now. How different must be your feelings from mine!

The *conclusion* of your remarks, which is so little of a piece with the body of the work that it puts me

in mind of the introduction to Horace's Art of Poetry *, is something extraordinary, and indeed shocking. After ascribing to me the worst designs, and the worst passions, that can occupy the head or heart of man, and for once intimating the possibility of something wrong lurking unperceived in your own bosom, speaking of the awful solemnities of the last day, you express a desire that "whatever of intemperate wrath, and carnal anger, has mixed itself on either side with the zeal with which we have pursued our fierce contention, may then be forgiven to us both; a prayer," you say, "which you breathe from the bottom of your soul," and to which you add, that if *I* have any part in the spirit of a christian, I shall, on my bended knees, say, Amen.

Which of us has been actuated by the bad spirit which you describe, our readers will infer, not from the declarations of either of us, but from our general temper, conduct, and manner of writing. If *I* be the man you describe, I can have no hope of forgiveness at the awful period to which you refer, unless I repent and reform *now*. If, contrary to the solemn declaration of your perfect innocence, quoted above, you had, when you wrote this *conclusion*, a latent suspicion that all had not been right on your side, you certainly, Sir, ought to have paused, have carefully revised what you had written, and have expunged what you could not approve. Boasting of more christianity than you will

* Humano capiti cervicem pictor equinam
Jungere si velit, et varias inducere plumas
Undique collatis membris, ut turpiter atrum
Desinat in piscem mulier formosa superne;
Spectatum admissi risum teneatis, amici?

allow to me, you ought to teach me, by your example, what it is that our religion requires in these cases, and not give any occasion to an unauthorized teacher in a conventicle to instruct an Archdeacon of the church of England in one of the first lessons in the christian school.

I am, Rev. Sir,

Your very humble Servant,

J. PRIESTLEY.

LETTERS

TO

DR. HORSLEY,

LORD BISHOP OF ST. DAVID'S.

PART IV.

BY JOSEPH PRIESTLEY, LL.D.F.R.S.

Facta minis quantum distent. OVID.

Hæc qui sacrilegis ausit convellere verbis
Schismaticus sit, et hæreticus;——
——— et in mentem quicquid tibi splendida bilis
Suggeret. Huc omnes tonitrus, huc fulgura linguæ
Congere, proque focis hic depugnetur et aris.

——— Animi non mores exuit atros
Vestis Hyperboreas superans candore pruinas.

BUCHANANI FRANCISCANUS.

PREFACE.

HAVING undertaken the defence of the Unitarian doctrine, or rather of this one position, that unitarianism was the faith of the primitive church; but not being willing to trouble the Public unnecessarily on the subject, I proposed to make one *annual reply* to such publications of my opponents as should make their appearance in the course of each year. This I did for the years 1786 and 1787; but nothing of any consequence having been produced in the year 1788, I had no occasion to write at all. The case has been something different this year. For though it will sufficiently appear that the advocates for the doctrine of the trinity have published nothing that is in the least degree formidable, enough has been done to give me an opportunity of showing how little the cause of unitarianism has to fear from any thing that the keenest eyes of its adversaries can discover to its prejudice.

If any man was ever interested in the support of any cause, it is the present Bishop of St. David's in that of trinitarianism; and yet I think there is hardly an example in the whole history of controversy, of any man having made so poor a figure as he has done in this. Sparing nothing that the force of language could supply to bear down his adversary, (with what temper others will judge,) I appeal to the impartial reader whether all his arguments have not only been totally without *weight*, but in general destitute even of *plausibility*.

Professing to prove my *incompetency in the subject*,

he has given most abundant proofs of his own, and even of his deficiency in the learned languages. He has shrunk from the defence of most of the articles which he undertook to discuss, and has totally failed in the few that he did select, especially with respect to his church of orthodox Jewish christians at Jerusalem after the time of Adrian, and the want of veracity in Origen, who appeared by his writings to know of no such church. Even these mistakes were borrowed from Mosheim; so that, in all probability, he was, before the commencement of this controversy, entirely unacquainted with all those original writers with which he ought to have been particularly conversant.

This, indeed, is most evident both with respect to himself and his late ally Mr. Badcock, from the manner in which they took up my quotation from Athanasius. It is clear that the very idea of the apostles' not choosing openly to teach the doctrine of the trinity, because it would give offence to their hearers, was absolutely new to them; though I have shown it to have been the opinion of all the christian fathers without exception, who mention the subject; so that my construction of this passage of Athanasius is abundantly confirmed by all the writers who either preceded or followed him; to say nothing of such men as Beausobre and Dr. Lardner having understood it exactly as I did, and of my antagonists being unable to produce the opinion of any writer whatever in favour of theirs. To call my conduct in this business, as they scrupled not to do, a *fraud* and an *imposition*, discovers, I will not say their own readiness to take such an unfair advantage themselves, (for I hope that no man is capable of such complicated folly and wickedness as in more

cases than one they have ascribed to me,) but such gross ignorance on the subject as is barely credible with respect to men who voluntarily undertook to criticize another.

On this subject (with respect to which I am willing to appeal to the most prejudiced of my readers, and which, when it is well considered, will appear to be, in fact, decisive in favour of the Unitarian doctrine having been taught by the apostles) the Bishop of St. David's, in both his last publications, has been absolutely silent; and I am persuaded he will continue to be so.

Mr. Badcock charging me with a *wilful perversion* of the passage in Justin Martyr, in which he is also countenanced by Bishop Horsley, is another instance of a premature triumph of the same kind; discovering both their ignorance of the subject of this controversy, and of a very common idiom of the Greek language. This charge I will also venture to say the Bishop of St. David's will not repeat.

I cannot help congratulating the friends of free inquiry on the attention that is given to the subject of this controversy, and the happy effects of this attention, indifferent, or distasteful, as it is to many. Though the superior orders of the clergy do not, for reasons that may easily be conceived, engage in the *public discussion*, it is frequently the subject of their charges to the clergy, of which that of the Bishop of Peterborough, noticed page 168, is one instance. But another proof of a singularly curious nature appears in a bill that was to have been brought into the House of Commons in favour of the Catholics the last session of parliament. For among the *provisos* in this bill, the seventh in

number is the following, which I give verbatim from a printed copy put into my hands:

"PROVISO, THAT THE ACT SHALL NOT EXTEND TO PERSONS WRITING AGAINST THE TRINITY."

This bill was not actually brought into parliament; but it had been settled with the minister, and the several articles of it had undergone much discussion. That this proviso was not inserted by the Catholics is very evident, nor could it have any meaning with respect to them; since they can no more be suspected of a disposition to write against the doctrine of the *trinity*, than against that of *transubstantiation*, both of them being equally fundamental articles of their creed. The real aspect of this clause, therefore, must be towards some persons who are known to disbelieve that doctrine, and who *may* be suspected of an intention to write against it; and the intimation it conveys is, that no favour is to be shown by government to such persons. But what is sufficient to my purpose is, that it shows, in the strongest light, the extreme apprehensions of some persons in power (no doubt either bishops, or statesmen influenced by bishops) on the subject of this controversy.

As to the intimation, given in so awkward and roundabout a manner, that no favour will be shown by the present government to those who, like myself, write against the doctrine of the trinity, it is sufficient to inform them, of what they might have discovered themselves, that our silence is not to be procured by such means. If we be silenced at all, it must be by *argument*, not by such implied *threats*. Let ministers of state direct the bishops to defend their cause by *writing*, and let not bishops so evidently betray their want of

confidence in argument, as to engage the ministry to oppose us by *laws*. Though both the methods will be ineffectual, there will be greater *propriety* in the former than in the latter.

This controversy having continued several years, and so much attention having been given to it, that there can be no doubt but that those who are most interested in the defence of the doctrine of the trinity must have produced all that they could allege in its favour, both the parties may now be supposed to be *come to an issue;* so that we may leave the decision to our proper judges, the learned Public. As to myself, I do not wish to tire my readers with a repetition of the same answers to the same arguments; and I am as little ambitious of *having the last word*, for the sake of its being so, as the Bishop of St. David's; and it must be something more *specious*, at least, than any thing that I have yet seen from him, or any other of my antagonists, that will convince me of the propriety of writing any more of these *Defences*. At a proper time I shall probably, in imitation of my antagonist, reprint all my *Tracts in this controversy*, and then I shall have an opportunity of noticing any thing that I may think deserving of it. My backwardness to write, when I have been properly called upon, has not yet been complained of.

I had proposed to conclude this controversy with a Serious Address to the Bench of Bishops, and to the Legislature of this Country. But I do not know that it will be necessary; as nothing I could say would be materially different from what I have already, and repeatedly, advanced on several other occasions. In this, however, I shall be determined by the circumstances

in which I may hereafter find myself. I particularly recommend an attention to what I have briefly urged in the conclusion of my History of the Corruptions of Christianity, my History of early Opinions concerning Christ, and my Letter to Mr. Pitt.

——————— Εχθρον δε μοι εστιν
Αυτις αριζηλως ειρημενα μυθολογευειν.

HOMERI ODYSS.

BIRMINGHAM,
January 1, 1790.

LETTERS

TO THE

LORD BISHOP OF ST. DAVID'S.

LETTER I.

Of his Lordship's avowed Object to depretiate his Antagonist.

My Lord,

After waiting, I believe, nearly twice *eighteen months*, the interval between your two preceding publications in this controversy, I am happy to see you make your appearance in it once more. Your Lordship's greatest admirers have not wished for this event so ardently as myself and my unitarian friends; because we consider your publications in this controversy as contributing in an eminent manner to the propagation of that great truth for which we think it glorious to contend, and which you oppose. The fact unquestionably is, that, since the commencement of this controversy, the progress of unitarianism has been rapid, compared to what it ever was before; and more within the church of England than among the Dissenters, though among them the number of converts has been considerable.

Truth will never fail to recommend and establish itself, notwithstanding, and even by means of, *all*

opposition; but *your Lordship's* mode of opposing it is so singularly efficacious in promoting it, that of all my antagonists I have always had the greatest satisfaction in replying to you. Besides, slow as your motions are, (owing to the natural *indolence* of which you complain,) your Lordship seems to be the most alert of all the members of your church who are engaged on the same side of the question with you. Mr. Howes, whose expedition was the greatest at one time, has, I fear, wholly declined the contest; and Dr. Horne's *great work*, so long promised, and so eagerly expected, I now almost despair of ever seeing. As to Dr. White, he seemed to promise, or rather *threaten*, much; but, alas! he has *performed* nothing at all. He may want the aid of my quondam admirer, Mr. Badcock.

On the whole, had I been permitted to choose my own antagonist, by exposing of whose arguments and manner of conducting the controversy I might avail myself the most, I should certainly have made choice of your Lordship. After seeing your first set of Letters to me, I said to several of my friends, that if I could have dictated the whole of your performance myself, it should have been just what I found it to be; your arguments were so extremely futile, and your manner of urging them giving me even more advantage than I wanted or wished for.

The *principle* of your Lordship's attack upon me, and the *object* of it, avowed in your first publication, and repeated in the preface of this, is indeed most absurd. "It seemed," you say, "that the most effectual preservative against the intended mischief would be to destroy the writer's credit, and the authority of

his name; which the fame of certain lucky discoveries in the prosecution of physical experiments had set high in popular esteem, by proof of his incompetency in every branch of literature connected with his present subject.—For this declared purpose a review of the imperfections of his work in the first part, relating to our Lord's divinity, was made the subject of a Charge delivered to the Clergy of the Archdeaconry of St. Alban's."

This curious plan of your Lordship's to destroy my reputation will probably bring to the minds of many of our readers the story of Crœsus. When he formed the design of making war upon Cyrus, he sent to consult the oracle of Apollo at Delphi; and the answer he received was, that, if he engaged in that war, he would overturn a great empire. He did so, and an empire was overturned; but that empire was *his own*. This, my Lord, would apply to your Lordship, if that could be said to be *overturned* which was never *established*.

Had your Lordship reflected ever so little on the history of literature, you must have perceived that no such plan as this ever has succeeded, nor is it possible in the nature of things that it ever should. No work of *man*, especially one of a historical kind, and of any considerable extent, ever was free from imperfections; and therefore, upon your principle, the credit of no historical work whatever could stand; and yet there are many works of this kind in the highest reputation, with far more acknowledged imperfections than you have pretended to discover in mine; not to say that you have been completely foiled in all your attempts to discover any error of the least consequence to my

main argument. Would it destroy the credit of the late Dr. Johnson with respect to his knowledge of the English language, to point out faults in his *style*, of which many might be found? Was Newton no philosopher because he made a mistake in one of his experiments; or no mathematician, because he is said to have committed an error in one of the demonstrations of his *Principia*?

No writer perhaps, except yourself, ever made greater mistakes in ecclesiastical history than Mr. Whiston; yet no person who is acquainted with them will say that *his* writings of this class are of no use. The real value of every work comes in time to be justly appreciated. Allowance is made for errors and imperfections, and due credit is given to every man and to every production for what is just, and will bear examination. This is all that I desire, and I am confident that I shall not be disappointed. As to all premature attempts to decry any particular work, or any particular man, such as your Lordship's and those of your *allies*, as you call them, with respect to *me*, they always operate in favour of what is thus attempted to be cried down. Because no person will take the trouble to give an alarm where he apprehends no danger.

After the contemptuous manner in which your Lordship affects upon all occasions to treat me, both with respect to *knowledge* and *integrity*, you may easily perceive that it has no effect in inspiring others with the same sentiments. It is not even believed that you really entertain them yourself. You make me destitute of the very rudiments of the Latin and Greek languages, and altogether unacquainted with the writers of christian antiquity. You pretend that I purposely

misquoted the common English translation of the Bible in order to impose upon my readers. You now say in a peculiar solemn manner that you would not take my evidence upon oath, and perpetually represent me as acting from the worst principles that can actuate a writer or a man. But all persons for whose good opinion I have the least regard, really consider all this, if it be not *affectation*, as a kind of *insanity*; and we cannot help thinking that your mind is affected in the same manner as that of the knight of La Mancha, who mistook a windmill for a giant, and a flock of sheep for an army. Your Lordship's peculiarly haughty and indignant phraseology only serves to amuse your readers by the singular curiosity of it.

The manner in which your Lordship affects to speak of my History of early Opinions concerning Christ cannot mortify any writer. I shall quote it for the entertainment of my readers. "The author is well aware that Dr. Priestley will charge him with one capital omission; that he hath taken no notice of any thing that may be contained relating to the various points of this controversy, in Dr. Priestley's History of early Opinions concerning Christ; that large work in four volumes, the result of a whole two years' study of the writers of antiquity, which, as it hath been published since Dr. Priestley's last Letters, may be supposed to contain better arguments, or at least his old arguments in a better form. The only apology to be made is a simple declaration of the truth. Not conceiving himself obliged to engage in the insipid task of reading so long a book without better hope of information from it than his past experience of the writer's knowledge in the subject gives, Dr. Priestley's adversary is as ig-

norant of the contents of that work as he could have been had it never been published. It is reported, indeed, that the work, whatever may be its merits, has a very slow sale. Of consequence it has found but few readers. The antagonist of Dr. Priestley, were he better acquainted with its contents, would still disdain to do the office of midwife for this laborious birth. He would not, by an unnecessary and unseasonable opposition to neglected arguments, be the instrument of drawing four volumes, fraught, as the very title imports, with pernicious heretical theology, from the obscurity in which they may innocently rot in the printer's warehouse." Preface.

Now, my Lord, I am confident that my expectation of *your* producing any thing new and valuable on the subject of my History, is in reality less than yours concerning me; and yet had you, in the course of this controversy, produced a work of the same extent, on the same subject, more engaged as I am in business of various kinds than I can suppose so *indolent* a man as your Lordship to be, I should have had the curiosity at least to *look into* it. I therefore cannot help suspecting, with many others, that there is another reason for your not reading my work, (if what you say of it be literally true,) and a reason that is not at all to its disadvantage. Slow as the sale of so large a work on such a subject must be expected to be, it produces its effect, and will do so still more the more it is considered; and of this, I doubt not, you yourself have some secret suspicion; and that if your Lordship thought that your *considering* and *answering* it would have done more than your *silence*, indolent as you are, you would have been roused to a little more exertion. But where there is no hope of

success there can be no motive to action. At present your Lordship's conduct may be compared to that of a general who should say to his antagonist, "Sir, I shall return the fire of your *small arms;* but as to your *cannon*, I shall not trouble myself about them." But you, my Lord, have so ill returned the fire of the small arms, that I do not wonder at your willingness to turn away from artillery of a large size.

As if you could not depretiate your antagonist too much, which, however, lessens the importance of your victory over him, you now speak of my philosophical discoveries (which on a former occasion you thought proper to mention with some respect) as merely *lucky* ones. On this subject I shall not make any defence; for *fortunate*, no doubt, I have been, as I have always readily confessed. But every philosopher knows that a series of success of twenty years continuance could not be wholly *fortuitous;* and some praise is always due to *activity* in any useful pursuit.

If I were disposed to imitate your Lordship's contemptuous treatment of me, (which, however, I flatter myself is only affected,) I might inquire concerning *your* discoveries, the effect of *luck* or otherwise, and I do not know where to look for information concerning them.

Of your Commentary on the works of Newton, undertaken, as you say, "*Societatis Regiæ Londinensis adhortatione, et summo Optimatum atque Literatorum totius Angliæ favore;*" from which the world was led to expect a work that would do credit not only to yourself, but to the nation which had produced the original, I know as little as you do of my History of early Opinions concerning Christ, and therefore I can

say nothing of my own knowledge; but mathematicians of my acquaintance do not say that it does much credit to either, and that your Notes illustrate no real difficulty.

The depth of your Lordship's knowledge on the subject of *this controversy* has been sufficiently explored; and what you have published in the form of Sermons*, though at the request of grave bishops, on other subjects of theology, are truly curiosities of the kind, and have contributed to the amusement of such of my friends as have had time to spare for the perusal of them. But as I hope the Public will not be influenced by your *mere opinion* concerning me or my *writings*, so neither do I desire that they should be influenced by mine concerning you or yours. Our *arguments* are before them, and I desire nothing more than a candid attention to them.

I am, &c.

LETTER II.

Of the Charge of Want of Candour in Dr. Priestley.

My Lord,

Professing, as you somewhere do, to "strike at your adversary without remorse," (and, as I may add, without judgement or discretion,) and perhaps per-

* One of these, viz. an Ordination Sermon, has been well animadverted upon by Mr. Wakefield, and another by the anonymous author of A Letter to his Lordship, occasioned by his Sermon on the Principle of Vitality in Man.

ceiving by the impression which your writings have made upon others, that you had indulged your pride and resentment rather more than became a christian, or more than answered your purpose, you seemed willing at least to bring me in as a sharer in your guilt, and charged me with "dividing the clergy into two classes, the *ignorant* and the *insincere*." In answer to this charge, I said that I could not pretend to recollect all that I had written, but that I was confident I never *meant* to say what you ascribed to me; that I had frequently declared the very contrary in the very frankest manner; and that if I had advanced any thing which by a fair construction should amount to the charge, I retracted it, and asked pardon. In a generous mind this kind of reply would have excited some generous sentiment; but it is to mistake the *soil* to expect any such produce from your Lordship.

After being frequently called upon to cite the passage on which your charge was founded, you now produce one in which I speak of *trinitarians* in general (but without any particular view to *the clergy*, many of whom are not trinitarians) as persons who, "*if they were ingenuous*, would rank with Socinians, believing that there is no proper divinity in Christ besides that of the Father, or else with tritheists, holding three equal and distinct Gods." You also quote two other passages, in one of which I speak of some persons as writing so weakly in defence of the doctrine of the Trinity, that it is barely possible that they should be in earnest; and another in which I suppose that some defenders of the established religion are insincere. But who will say that the whole of any class of men, defenders of an establishment or not, are sincere? Must

complaisance require us to say that there are no bad men in the world, or that any particular class of men is free from them, when truth requires the contrary, and candour allows that there are many who are good?

If what I have said with respect to *ingenuousness* had been interpreted by the general strain of my writings, the controversial ones not excepted, it would have been ascribed to what I have more than once said of that *secret influence of motives*, of which the agent himself is not distinctly apprized, and what only a rigorous examination of himself, and a comparison of his conduct with that of other men, can enable him to discover. In this sense many worthy persons are far from being those ingenuous and impartial inquirers after truth that they take themselves to be, not perceiving the real source or tendency of their principles.

As this is a subject to which I wish that more attention were given, I shall take the liberty to make a pretty large quotation from what I advanced concerning it in the very first of my controversial tracts, viz. Considerations on Differences of Opinion among Christians, addressed to Mr. Venn; and I do it the rather, as that pamphlet has now been long out of print, and, having fully answered its purpose, will hardly ever be reprinted. A small part of it was quoted before.

"Very few of the actions of men," p. 41, "have, I believe, one simple cause. We are generally influenced by a variety of motives in whatever we do. It therefore behoves us the more carefully to distinguish the influences to which we are subject, and under which we really act."

"When persons expressly avow the motives of their

conduct, not to acquiesce in their declarations has the appearance of questioning their veracity, because it is taken for granted that every man must know the principles of his own conduct. But the human mind is so complex a thing, that there is great room for self-deception, especially in cases where the passions and affections are strong, and when they occasion similar emotions as well as produce similar effects. In this case a by-stander may be a better judge than a man's self. A zeal for our opinions, and a zeal for our party, on the advancement of which our own personal reputation and influence depend, are necessarily connected, and reciprocally promote one another. For the same reason, a dislike of opinions has an affinity with the dislike of those who hold them, as men who are embarked in an interest opposite to ours, and whose credit and authority obstruct our own; and all the emotions of mind that are excited by the same object, how different soever they be originally, by frequent association mix together, so that the parts of that complex feeling which results from their union are no longer distinguishable. When two persons who have had frequent intercourse, have been a long time at variance, and the subjects of their contention have been numerous, can either of them analyse the sudden emotion they will feel in an unexpected meeting?

"We often begin to act from one motive, but, as we proceed, we come insensibly within the influence of others; so that in some cases the *habit* shall continue, though the *original motive* should cease to have any influence at all; and yet it may be impossible to say in what part of this progress the influence of one motive ceased, and that of another began; the change

of principle and character having been insensible, and altogether imperceptible.

"The application of this doctrine may be made both by those who are provoked at others for holding opinions which they think damnable, and by those who laugh at them for opinions which they think ridiculous. In many cases, I am satisfied that the pure *love of truth* is on both sides absorbed in passions of a very different nature. I would overlook every thing in a man who meant nothing but to inform me of any thing that he thought me ignorant of; but they who have that pretence in their mouths only, when it is far from their hearts, though they may deceive themselves as well as others, are by no means entitled to so favourable a reception.

"It behoves us, however, carefully to distinguish between this *latent insincerity*, under the influence of which men deceive themselves, and that *direct prevarication* with which those who are engaged in debate are too ready to charge one another, as if their adversaries *knowingly* opposed, or concealed, the truth. This last is a crime of so heinous a nature, that I should be very unwilling to impute it to any person whatever. For a man voluntarily to undertake the defence of what he thinks to be error, and knowingly to pervert the scriptures in order to make them favour his purpose, argues the heart to be so totally void of all principle of rectitude; it is such an insult upon the God of truth, and such a contempt of his judgements, that I think human nature could never be so depraved as to be capable of it, and that no situation in human life could supply a sufficient temptation for such conduct. There are such well known instances of the

force of prejudice, that I had rather ascribe any opinion, how absurd soever, in any man, how intelligent soever in other respects, to wrong judgement, than to a bad heart. I can hardly imagine any case in which the chance would not be in favour of the former.

"If these remarks be just, with what caution should we censure any person with respect to a point of mere speculation! How should I be affected at the day of judgement to be convinced of the integrity, and perhaps the right judgement also, of an adversary whom I should have treated in an illiberal and insulting manner!" P. 4, &c.

Whether you, my Lord, will allow the truth of these observations I cannot tell. You certainly have not acted upon them, either with respect to the excellent Origen, or myself. But I have not copied the above for the use of your Lordship; considering you to be a person to whom some of them are so far applicable, that I do not expect the least benefit from the fairest and justest representation of any thing connected with this controversy; and yet without thinking so ill of you, as you profess to do of me.

That your Lordship is in this state of mind, destitute of what I call *perfect ingenuousness*, is evident from the turn that you have given to a passage in my *Sermon* to which I had referred you, in answer to your charge of gross illiberality. I there speak in the highest terms that I could of the *good understanding*, and the *sincerity*, both of many Catholics, and members of the church of England, even "those who are sensible of the corruptions and errors of the system in which they are entangled, and yet have not been able to break their chains." Of this you say, "It is a long passage,

in which he professes to hold the church of England in no less estimation than the church of Rome;" which I might have done without thinking well of either of them. This I cannot call a fair and ingenuous conduct, because it gives your readers (many of whom, I believe, never read any thing of mine) a false idea of what I write. Besides, I said nothing directly about the two *churches* of England, or of Rome, but of the *members* of them; being openly hostile to the *systems*, but friendly to their *adherents*.

I am, &c.

LETTER III.

Of the Charge of borrowing from Zuicker.

My Lord,

Though my rule in controversy is by no means your Lordship's above mentioned, viz. "to strike without remorse at whatever in your adversary you find to be vulnerable, in order to destroy his character and credit," I must, now that I am upon the subject of *latent disingenuousness*, produce an instance which has much the appearance of it in your Lordship's conduct to me.

You charged me with having "produced few, if any, arguments, but what are found in the writings either of Zuicker or Episcopius." From this it might naturally be concluded, that you had *compared* my arguments with those of those two writers, and had *found* them to be the same; which implies that you

had *seen*, and *perused*, their works. I entertained no doubt of it myself; and taking it for granted that your Lordship had the work of Zuicker, or had access to it, (and it being a book that I had never seen, and could not by any means procure,) I desired a common friend to apply to you for it. Your answers, which were different at different times, convinced him that you had never seen the book at all. It has since been sent to me by a learned foreign correspondent, and I find Zuicker's views of the state of opinions in early times to be so different from mine, that I am confident, if you had ever *seen* his work, you had never *read* it. For, if you had, you could never have asserted that I had borrowed from him at all.

Zuicker says, p. 16, that Justin Martyr, besides availing himself of his Platonic principles, derived his notion of a trinity from the spurious verses of Orpheus, which he supposes to have been written by some disciple of Simon Magus. He also makes Simon Magus the parent of the Praxeans, Patripassians, and Sabellians, p. 17. Now these opinions are fundamentally different from mine. I suppose Justin Martyr to have borrowed from nothing besides his Platonism; and he was so far from being friendly to Gnosticism, which was the offspring of the school of Simon Magus, that he wrote a treatise against it. And I consider the Praxeans, Patripassians, and Sabellians, as no other than philosophical Unitarians.

Except these opinions, there is nothing of much consequence in the work of Zuicker, besides a proof, very much detailed for so small a treatise as his is, of the christian fathers before the council of Nicè not having believed the *equality* of the Son to the Father;

and this, if I had read nothing of antiquity myself, I might have borrowed from Dr. Clarke and twenty other writers as well as Zuicker.

I submit it to the reader, therefore, whether your Lordship appears to have been perfectly ingenuous in saying that I had borrowed from Zuicker, or whether you did not advance this charge at random, without any more knowledge of Zuicker's work than you got from Bishop Bull.

While I am on the subject of Zuicker, I shall observe that he had no doubt, p. 114, but that, in the passage of Jerom, the true sense of which has been debated between us, the writer meant to assert the identity of the *Ebionites* and *Nazarenes* with respect to every thing of importance.

Zuicker also makes a good observation, p. 110, on the manner in which Austin introduces his account of the Ebionites immediately after that of the Nazarenes, which is, *Ebionæi Christum* etiam *tantummodo hominem ducunt*; "The Ebionites *also* suppose Christ to be a mere man." As if it implied that the Nazarenes thought the same, though he had not expressly asserted as much in his account of them, the word *etiam* intimating as much. I am inclined to think that Austin *had* written this in the account of the Nazarenes, but that the clause is now lost. I cannot else account for the insertion of *etiam, also*, in the next sentence.

I am, &c.

LETTER IV.

Of the Damnatory Clause in the Athanasian Creed.

MY LORD,

So ready is your Lordship to charge me with the grossest ignorance, that you most egregiously expose your own, or, which is worse, your disposition to cavil, when you say, "Dr. Priestley, I believe, is the only writer who ever confounded two things so totally distinct as an *anathema* and an *article of faith*, which he conceives the *damnatory clause* in the Athanasian creed to be."

The idle punctilio on which this remark of your Lordship's turns, relates to the acts of those councils in which it was the custom to make *a creed*, and then to annex *anathemas* to it. But this creed of Athanasius is no act of any council. You neither know who composed it, when it made its first appearance, or how it came into the public offices of the church. From the structure of it it is evidently a *mere creed*, containing nothing besides *propositions*, which were apprehended by the composer to be entitled to the firmest faith; and that this *damnatory clause* in question is one of those propositions, is evident both from the *form* and the *place* of it.

It is not only introduced both at the beginning and at the end of the creed, but, as if that was not sufficient, it has a place in the middle likewise: thus, "Whosoever will be saved, before all things it is necessary that he hold the catholic faith; which faith except every one do keep whole and undefiled, without doubt he shall perish everlastingly." Thus this

celebrated creed begins. About the middle we find the following clauses: "He therefore that will be saved must thus think of the trinity. Furthermore it is necessary to everlasting salvation that he also believe rightly the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ." Lastly, it closes with this sentence, "This is the catholic faith, which except a man believe faithfully, he cannot be saved."

Do not these anathemas or damnatory clauses contain real *propositions?* and does not the person who pronounces them affirm the truth of those propositions? Can any person seriously say, that "they who do not believe all the articles of this creed shall without doubt perish everlastingly," without believing that they will perish everlastingly for their disbelief? Could any plainer terms have been contrived for the purpose? How then are these celebrated *damnatory clauses*, as your Lordship says, *no part of the creed*, when every person who professes to believe *the whole* of course receives these *parts?*

Had the word *anathema* only been used, it is possible that the force of it might not have been attended to by the composer; it being too common to make use of words, especially in learned and foreign languages, without attending to their strict meaning; and your Lordship says it is so used in your Ecclesiastical Canons when it is applied to those who speak disrespectfully of the Book of Common Prayer (though I would not answer, as your Lordship does, for the compilers of those canons *not* intending eternal damnation by it); but where the words *perish everlastingly* are expressly and repeatedly used, there can be no doubt with respect to the nature of the anathema. The

damnatory clause so expressed is most unquestionably *an article of faith*, and certainly of a most serious and alarming kind. Indeed, my Lord, it is trifling with your readers, and an insult on common sense, to talk of any real difference between this *damnatory clause* and the other parts of the Athanasian creed.

Whatever profession, therefore, your Lordship may inconsistently make of your charity, and notwithstanding your idle parade about meeting me in heaven, when I believe you would be sorry to meet me any where, and are not very fond of meeting me in this controversy; unless my everlasting damnation be an article in your creed, you have subscribed the most solemn form of words that can be devised by man without meaning any thing at all by them; and why then may you not have subscribed every thing else with as little truth? Many, no doubt, *do* subscribe in this light and careless manner; which shows the dreadful effect of the *habit of subscribing*. It leads to the utter perversion of the plainest meaning of words, and opens a door to every kind of insincerity. By your Lordship's own confession, you yourself no more believe what you have subscribed with respect to this creed, than you do the Koran.

Indeed, your Lordship's account of the trinity is a very different thing from the doctrine of this creed. For you suppose a manifest *superiority* in the Father, and yet in repeating this creed you can say of the three persons, "that none of them is afore or after the other, none is greater or lesser than another." Were you, my Lord, perfectly ingenuous, and were your mind perfectly unbiassed, you could not but see, and would certainly shudder at, the absurdities and contradictions

in your declarations, and feel the same horror at subscribing, that I do.

If your Lordship defends these damnatory clauses on the principle of *meaning nothing at all by them*, you vindicate the common cursing and swearing that we every day hear in our streets; where profane persons are continually sending their own souls, and the souls of other people, to hell, with as little meaning as your Lordship pretends to. If the phrase *perish everlastingly* does not mean perish everlastingly, your Lordship should have informed us what it does mean. It is certainly no *blessing*, but a *curse* of some kind or other.

I do not wonder that men of enlightened and ingenuous minds, such as Archbishop Tillotson, should express a wish that they were *well rid* of this creed. But others, I fear, (now, my Lord, mark my uncharitableness,) would not be sorry if the language of it was still more harsh, that by the obligation to subscribe it there might be fewer competitors for those emoluments which may be obtained by subscription. For all your subscriptions do not exclude unbelievers in all religion, natural and revealed; persons who, on such terms as you offer, will subscribe any thing that is tendered to them. If you would have fewer of *these*, either in the church or out of it, you must throw out every thing from your creeds and subscriptions which any sincere christian, or believer in the divine mission of Christ, cannot conscientiously assent to. Thus, however, you may say, Socinians might enter; and you may prefer the society of unbelievers to theirs, because, whether in or out of the church, they will give you much less trouble.

Indeed, my Lord, the opposers of all reformation will always have trouble from the zealous friends of it. We think it our duty to *cry aloud, and not spare,* when we see such abominations in the public worship of Almighty God as are to be found in all the civil establishments of christianity in the world; corruptions borrowed from heathen polytheism, and which in their nature and effects are very similar to it.

I am, &c.

LETTER V.

Of the Phrase, Coming in the Flesh.

MY LORD,

YOUR Lordship maintained at large that the phrase *coming in the flesh,* applied by the apostle John to Christ, necessarily implies a *pre-existent state.* I think it a sufficient answer, that the Jews, by whom the phrase was used, had no such idea; since it is well known that they characterized the Messiah by the phrase *he that is to come*; when, at the same time, it is so well known that I shall not trouble myself to repeat the proof of it, that no Jews ever expected any other than a mere man for their Messiah. By *him that was to come* they meant the person who had been *promised* them, as to make his appearance in due time.

When, therefore, the Messiah *was come,* and a question arose concerning his *nature,* whether he had *real flesh,* or not, it was certainly not unnatural for a Jew, who believed that Christ, or *he that was to come,* was

a *real man*, and had *real flesh*, to express his opinion by saying that *Christ was come in the flesh*; and yet your Lordship says, that "no reason can be devised why they (the Jews) should make choice of such uncouth mysterious words for the enunciation of so simple a proposition, which they might easily have stated in terms incapable of misconstruction." Now, considering the phraseology to which the Jews had been long accustomed in speaking of the Messiah, I appeal to our readers whether there be any thing peculiarly uncouth, mysterious, or unnatural in it.

I alleged a passage in the epistle of Polycarp, in which I thought, and still think, that the same phrase (evidently borrowed by him from the apostle John) indicates nothing more than *simple humanity*, in opposition to those Gnostics who maintained that Christ had not *real flesh*; because in the very same sentence he gives two other characters, which evidently apply to the Gnostics only. I therefore concluded that the former clause was only another part of the description of the same class of men. Had he meant to describe the Gnostics, by enumerating their most distinguishing tenets, he could not well have expressed himself otherwise. This, however, I shall argue no further, but submit to the judgement of our readers.

Your Lordship now alleges a passage from the epistle of Barnabas, which you say, p. 422, "is very decisive, in which the allusion to a prior condition of our Lord is manifest, and so necessary to the writer's purpose, that if the phrase be understood without such allusion the whole sentence is nonsense." It is as follows: "For if he had not come in the flesh, how should we mortals, seeing him, have been preserved, when they

who behold the sun, which is to perish [*and is the work of his hands*], are unable to look directly against its rays?" I shall continue the quotation a little further from Wake's translation, p. 167, "Wherefore the Son of God came in the flesh for this cause, that he might fill up the measure of their iniquity, who have persecuted his prophets unto death; and for the same reason also he suffered. For God hath said of the stripes of his flesh, that they were from *them*; and I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered. Thus he would suffer, because it behoved him to suffer upon the cross," &c.

Now, though the writer of this epistle might believe that Christ pre-existed, and made the world, it does not follow that he considered this phrase *coming in the flesh* as necessarily implying so much; and the general and obvious sense of the passage is complete without supposing any reference to a pre-existent state at all. For it is only this, that he could not have been the object of our senses, and could not have suffered upon the cross, as was foretold concerning him, if he had not had *a body* that was capable of being *seen*, and of *suffering*. Since the reasoning of this writer is so clear, without any allusion to a pre-existent state, it adds greatly to the probability of the clause [*which is the work of his hands*] which is omitted in the old Latin translation, being an interpolation; and it is not doubted by any men of learning, that there are evident marks of interpolation in all the remains of the writings of this age.

Besides, if Christ be a compound being, consisting of *soul* and *body*, besides the *divinity*; and if *Christ* came from heaven, this ought to apply to *the whole*

and not to any *part* of him only; and then his *flesh* and his *human soul* must also have pre-existed, and have come down from heaven as well as the *divine logos.* I am satisfied, however, that both Polycarp, and the author of this epistle, in its original state, whoever he was, alluded to nothing more than the opinion of those Gnostics who held that Christ had no real body, and therefore that, though he was *come* according to the prophecies concerning him, he was not *come in the flesh.* I am, &c.

LETTER VI.

Of the Meaning of the Word Idiota *in Tertullian.*

My Lord,

Your Lordship still maintains that the word *idiota*, which Tertullian applies to the *major pars credentium*, means *idiot* in English; and with great labour, no doubt, you have at length made out no less than *ten* significations of this word, and *one* of them, p. 427, is *stupid*, *dunce*, *booby*, &c. But for *this*, which is the only one to your Lordship's purpose, you produce no authority from any writer whatever; except some dictionary makers, whom the learned Bentley would have called "very idiots in Greek and Latin" for their pains; the only synonyms that he allows being *illiteratus*, *indoctus*, *rudis.* Remarks on Free Thinking, p. 118. Your ninth and harshest sense of the word, in any antient writer, is that in Cicero, where it is applied to *those who wanted taste in the fine arts*, and among them he ranks himself, *quemvis nostrum*, &c.

Acknowledging, as I have no objection to do, that by this word Tertullian meant to express something more opprobrious than by *simplices*, or even *imprudentes* (though the latter is not very evident), it must be such an epithet as he thought applicable to *the greater part of christians*; and surely he would not choose to call them *idiots*, or even *dunces* and *boobies*. Out of humour he was, no doubt, with those who could not relish his sublime doctrine of the trinity, and who thought it to be an infringement upon the great doctrine of the *sole monarchy of God the Father*; but he could not impute it to a natural defect in point of understanding, it being so very evident that the bulk of mankind are not deficient in that respect.

However, it is of no consequence by what epithet Tertullian, or any other writer, should choose to denominate the *common people*; for they are the same in all ages, and therefore we are as good judges as he could be. The *major pars credentium*, or the great mass of christians, were no doubt *unlearned*, not having had the advantage of a liberal education; but they did not therefore *want understanding*, or had less natural good sense than the learned. And considering in what the *learning* of that age consisted, and how it tended, as I have shown, to mislead men with respect to their ideas of the divine nature, it is infinitely more probable that the plain good sense of the common people would form a right judgement in this case than all the knowledge of the learned; to say nothing of the greater probability of the common people longer retaining the original doctrine concerning Christ. For, whether your Lordship like the observation or not, it is universally true, that old opinions are to be looked

for among the common people, rather than among the learned and speculative.

You say, p. 432, that the natural sense of Tertullian's words is, that "this scruple," viz. their objection to the doctrine of the trinity, "was incident chiefly to persons of that description; not that it was to be found in the whole body of the common people. He insinuates that persons of that weak character only, were liable to that alarm." But certainly in Tertullian's idea this objection to the doctrine of the trinity, or rather this *dread* of it, was common to *all* those whom he calls *simplices*, *imprudentes*, and *idiotæ*, for he makes no exception; and of such, he says, the greater part of christians consisted. Consequently, by his own reluctant confession, the majority of the christians of his age, whatever he might choose to call them, were unitarians, and dreaded (*expavescebant*) the doctrine of the trinity, even in the qualified sense in which it was then maintained; when there was no idea of the proper *equality of the Son to the Father*, and when it was thought that *there was a time when he did not exist*. For such unquestionably was the opinion of Tertullian himself.

Thus, my Lord, your elaborate defence of your use of the word *idiota* is mere lost labour, and renders your ignorance still more conspicuous than it was, by the addition of incorrigible obstinacy in error.

I am, &c.

LETTER VII.

Of Heretics, according to Irenæus.

My Lord,

Another question between us is, Who were the *heretics* of early times? And I have shown by a series of quotations from the earliest writers to those of a pretty late date, considering the nature of the question, that the *Gnostics* only were considered in that light, as holding assemblies separate from those who called themselves the *catholic church.* I had said that Irenæus, though he wrote a large treatise against heretics, and expressed great dislike of the *Ebionites,* had not called them *heretics.* In one passage I said I had once been of opinion that he *had* applied that epithet to them; but that on reconsidering it I was of a different opinion, and I am so still, notwithstanding what your Lordship has advanced in reply to me.

I further added, that "if there was any other passage in which Irenæus called the Ebionites heretics, I had overlooked it." Such a passage, however, your Lordship now produces, p. 455, for among other heretics he there enumerates the Ebionites. But this is of no consequence to my argument; and if I had attended to the passage I should have produced it myself, as I have never failed to do with respect to every thing else that appeared to me to be of any consequence, whether it made for me or against me. But there is an evident reason why the Ebionites were pretty soon considered as heretics, and a reason which did not affect the Unitarians among the Gentiles. For the Jewish christians,

on account of their using a different language, held *separate assemblies* from those who used the Greek tongue; and besides, Jerom expressly says they were deemed heretics ONLY *on the account of their attachment to the institutions of Moses.*

I had further said, that it was contrary to Irenæus's *definition of heresy* to consider the Ebionites as heretics. To this your Lordship says, in your usual strain of politeness, when you think you have any advantage, p. 456, "he will confer a mighty obligation upon the learned world, if he would be pleased to give information in what part of the whole work of Irenæus that definition may be found."

I answer, that a strictly *logical definition of heresy* may not perhaps be found in Irenæus, for such definitions are not common in antient writers. But he repeatedly says that concerning *all heretics,* which does not in the least apply to the Ebionites, which is fully equivalent to what I said; and since you have not read my History of Early Opinions concerning Christ, and probably never will do it, I shall take the liberty to copy a few passages to this purpose from it, vol. i. p. 275, &c.

Irenæus considered Simon Magus as a person from whom all heretics sprung. But his doctrines were those of the Gnostics, and so opposite to those of the Unitarians, that they were never considered as having the same source. Of *all heretics,* he says, that "they drew men off from him who made and governs the world, as if they had something higher and greater to show than he who made the heavens and the earth, and all things therein. They all agree," he says, "in the same blasphemy against the Maker of all things."

"The doctrine of Valentinus comprehends all heresies; so that in overturning his system all heresy is overturned. They also blaspheme in supposing the Maker of all things to be an evil being, and they blaspheme our Lord by dividing Jesus from the Christ. There is a connexion," he says, "between all heresies, except that Tatian advanced something that was new." He speaks of all heretics as "having quitted the church," and as "taxing the holy presbyters with ignorance, not considering how much better is an ignorant person who is religious *(idiota religiosus)* than a blasphemous and impious sophist." He likewise says, that "all the heretics were much later than the bishops to whom the apostles committed the churches."

It would be losing my own time, and that of my readers, to show that none of these characters, which this writer applies to *all heretics*, belonged to the Ebionites, and therefore that, to have been consistent with himself, Irenæus ought not to have considered the Ebionites as heretics.

As to your Lordship's curious attempt to find an agreement between the Gnostics and the Ebionites, I shall leave it without any remark to the judgement of our readers. In some respects, no doubt, the Unitarians and Trinitarians are agreed; but it does not therefore follow that they would both be referred to the same class of christians. There were, as I have shown at large, Jewish Gnostics, and, being Jews, they might be called Ebionites; but they all believed that the supreme God, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, both made the world, and gave the law by Moses; which are the very reverse of the doctrines that Irenæus ascribes to *all* heretics. I am, &c.

LETTER VIII.

Of the Origin of the Son from the Father's Contemplation of his own Perfections.

My Lord,

This letter I shall devote to that most curious subject, *the origin of the Son from the Father's contemplation of his own perfections*, which your Lordship has thought proper once more to bring before the public; but which I should have thought a judicious friend would have advised you to keep as far as possible out of sight. You express yourself, however, with more diffidence than before; which is a thing unusual with your Lordship.

You justly say, p. 458, "In a subject so far above the comprehension of the human mind as the doctrine of the trinity must be confessed to be, in all its branches, extreme caution should be used to keep the doctrine itself, as it is delivered in God's word, distinct from every thing that has been devised by man, or that may even occur to a man's own thoughts, to illustrate or explain its difficulties. Every one who has ever thought for any length of time upon the subject cannot but fall insensibly, and involuntarily, upon some way or other of representing the thing to his own mind. In this manner, every one who meddles at all with the subject will be apt to form a solution for himself, of what seemed to him the principal difficulties. But since it must be confessed that the human mind in these inquiries is groping in the dark, every step that she ventures to advance beyond the point to which the clear

light of revelation reaches, the probability is that all these private solutions are, in different ways, and in different degrees, but all in some way, and in some degree, erroneous; and it will rarely happen that the solution invented by one man will suit the conceptions of another. It were therefore to be wished that, in treating this mysterious subject, men would not, in their zeal to illustrate what after their utmost efforts must remain in some parts incomprehensible, be too forward to mix their private opinions with the public doctrine. Nay, it should be a point of conscience," you add, " with every writer to keep any particular opinions he may have formed as much as possible out of sight, that divine truth may not be debased with a mixture of the alloy of human error," &c.

This conduct, my Lord, would have been good policy: but in the pride of your understanding you were not able to observe it, and, in your imprudent forwardness to illustrate what is in itself so palpably absurd as to be incapable of illustration, (as much as it is of *proof,)* your Lordship produced a sentiment so supereminently absurd as to have contributed not a little to the entertainment of our common readers; and what your Lordship has now added on the subject will, if I be not mistaken, considerably add to their amusement.

Your Lordship's original observation, to which you now, by abridging it, give a different turn, was as follows: Tracts, p. *55*, " The sense," viz. of a passage in Athenagoras, " is, that the personal subsistence of a divine logos is implied in the very idea of a God; and the argument rests on a principle which was common to all the Platonic fathers, and seems to be founded

in scripture, that the existence of the Son flows necessarily from the divine intellect exerted on itself, from the Father's contemplation of his own perfections. But as the Father ever was, his perfections have ever been, and his intellect has ever been active. But perfections which have ever been the ever-active intellect must ever have contemplated; and the contemplation which has ever been must ever have been accompanied with its just effect, the personal existence of the Son."

Such, my Lord, was the original *text*, which is now shrunk up into a very small compass, viz. that "the existence of the Son," p. 460, "flows necessarily from the divine intellect exerted on itself," and which not being *dilated*, as it was so curiously done in your Lordship's first publication, might have escaped my notice. Accompanied with your former *illustration* it struck me, and I believe most of your readers who gave any attention to it, as something uncommonly ridiculous; and I maintained that it was also most notoriously *false in point of fact*, and betrayed an utter unacquaintedness with every thing of primitive antiquity on the subject. And this opinion, notwithstanding your Lordship's elaborate vindication of yourself, I still maintain. For, according to the most obvious construction of the passage, the production of the Son was absolutely *necessary*, and did not at all depend upon the *will* of the Father; whereas, according to all the Platonic fathers before the Council of Nice, the generation of the Son was the *voluntary act* of the Father, and an act not exerted from all eternity, (which if it had been *necessary* it could not but have been,) but which took place *in time*, viz. just before the creation of the world, and for the purpose of that creation. In the work which

your Lordship has not read, and which it is therefore more necessary for me to quote, is the following evidence of this.

Tatian represents the Father as having been *alone* before the creation of the world, that *at his will* the Logos came out of him. Theophilus says, that "according to John, God was at first alone, and the Logos in him." Clemens Alexandrinus says that "the Father was God before he was a Creator, but, being good, he *chose* to be a Creator and a Father; and he speaks of the Son as deriving his origin from the *will* of the Father." "Do you inquire about the generation of the Logos," says Hippolytus, "God the Father generated whom he pleased, and as he pleased."

Tertullian expressly says that "God was not always a father, or a judge; since he could not be a father before he had a son, nor a judge before there was sin; and there was a time when both sin and the Son, which made God to be a judge and a father, were not." Ad Hermogenem, cap. iii. Opera, p. 234.

Novatian (or rather Novatus) says, Nothing was before Christ but the Father, and that the Son was generated from God *when he chose*. "God," says Lactantius, "before he undertook the construction of this world generated an incorruptible spirit, which he called his Son." Eusebius, speaking of God's intending to form the material world, says, "he thought of making one to govern and direct the whole." He also says, "light is emitted from the sun necessarily, but the Son became the image of the Father from his knowledge and intention; and that *when he pleased,* he became the Father of a Son." "We believe," says Athanasius, "that God generated the Son spontaneously, and

voluntarily." History of early Opinions concerning Christ, vol. ii. p. 130, &c.

Were not these writers, my Lord, *Platonic fathers*, according to *all* of whom your Lordship says that the generation of the Son was *necessary*? If these be not Platonic fathers, please to inform us who were. And yet you have the assurance to say, p. 464, "To me it is matter of astonishment that any one can read some of the passages which Dr. Priestley himself has produced from Athenagoras, Tatian, Tertullian, and others, and not perceive that this notion was common to *all* those writers, and is the principle upon which all they have said upon the subject rests."

In a later period, when the idea of the *equality* of the Son to the Father was advanced, the orthodox divines were obliged to give up their opinion of the *voluntary* generation of the Son, and to make his existence as *necessary* as that of the Father himself; but still their idea was not the same with your Lordship's, viz. that it was the necessary result of the Father *contemplating*, that is, *viewing* himself. This is a peculiar *mode* of necessary origination, for which your Lordship finds no colour till you come to a much later period than that of the Platonic fathers; and after all it is no more than *a colour* that you find in the writings of any theologians for this curious and singular notion. Basil, you find, says that *the Son came forth from intellect*, as no doubt he must if he came from *the Deity*, who is generally represented as *pure intellect*; but he does not say that this *coming forth* was a *necessary* consequence of the Father's *contemplating himself*.

From the fathers you pass to the *schoolmen*: but

from none of them do you produce any quotation at all; nor does your Lordship's general account of their opinions, even in your own words, imply that any of them had that precise idea which you have given out. For generation *by intellect*, or *by will*, is not sufficiently definite for your purpose.

Coming down lower in your laborious search after nonsense than the Council of Trent, you do, I acknowledge, find a similarity to your opinion *in words*. For in the *Catechismus ad Parochos*, p. 467, you find mention made of "a wonderful fecundity of God the Father, that by contemplating and exerting his intelligence upon himself he begets a Son, the exact counterpart and equal of himself." But here the word *contemplating* means only *thinking*, and not a mere *viewing of himself*, which is the idea that your Lordship's language suggests; nor is this exerting of *intelligence upon itself*, by which the Son was begotten, said, or intimated to be, *necessary*; which your Lordship makes it to have been. The other passages which you quote are all of them from writers subsequent to the Council of Trent, (which, I own, I was not much acquainted with, and which it is probable your Lordship knew as little of as myself, till you found it necessary to look out for some authority or other, modern if not ancient, for your curious imagination,) and express no more than *this*: none of them therefore are at all to your purpose.

But supposing that these writers should have had the same idea with your Lordship, my ignorance of this circumstance would not, as you say, p. 464, "evince my ignorance of the religious opinions of every age, and how much the oldest things are novel-

ties to me;" but only my ignorance of such things as I imagine our readers will think to be hardly worth knowing. In all christian *antiquity*, to which my inquiries have been chiefly confined, no such idea as yours occurs. Your Lordship is obliged to go even beyond the age of the schoolmen for something only *like* it; so that I was abundantly justified in saying that, on reading your account, "I fancied myself got back to the darkest of the dark ages, or at least that I was reading Peter Lombard, Thomas Aquinas, or Duns Scotus."

You do very well, my Lord, to forbear quoting any of those *texts of scripture* (though you say, p. 461, "many phrases of holy writ seem to you to allude to it,") on which you are of opinion that this "curious notion *seems to be founded.*" You might well suppose that you had already afforded *the prophane* too much matter for their diversion.

I also cannot help commending your prudence in saying, p. 476, "about the *truth* of the opinion I have declared that I will not dispute, and I shall keep my word." It is much better to acknowledge an error *tacitly*, by giving up the defence of it where it is most necessary, than not to acknowledge it at all.

As your Lordship, however, has thought proper to bring this curious subject once more before the public, I wish you had not contented yourself with endeavouring to find *authorities* for your opinion among authors which, if they could be found, would only be treated with ridicule, but have answered my other queries necessarily arising from it. A *reductio ad absurdum* is always deemed a sufficient refutation of any proposition. Now, among other things, I observed, that if

the Father's contemplation of his perfections necessarily produced a Son, this Son, being in all respects *equal to the Father*, and consequently having the same perfections to contemplate, and of course the same power of contemplation, must have produced another Son.

That you may the more distinctly perceive the force of this reasoning, I shall repeat concerning the *Son* what you say of the *Father*; since you must allow that, *mutatis mutandis*, it must be equally just in one case as the other. "As the Son ever was, his perfections have ever been; and his intellect has been ever active. But perfections which have ever been the ever active intellect must ever have contemplated; and the contemplation which has ever been must ever have been accompanied with its just effect, the personal existence of a Son," which in this case will be a *grandson*.

The same reasoning will equally apply to the *Holy Spirit*; so that this divine person also, by the contemplation of his perfections, must produce a son; and the same being true of all the sons, and grandsons, and great grandsons, &c. &c. &c. of these divine persons, (to say nothing of the necessary repetition of the same process with respect to them all,) we have here a source of multiplication of divine persons *ad infinitum*; and what expedient you can apply to stop the progress of this wonderful *fecundity*, when there is danger of its exceeding its just bounds, your Lordship does not say. This, you will say, is burlesquing a grave subject. But, my Lord, it is yourself who have burlesqued it, and not I; and your Lordship alone is answerable for all the ridicule which your officious explanation has brought upon the doctrine, and upon yourself. If a man will

say ridiculous things, he must be content to be the subject of ridicule. This I hope will be a caution to you in future, especially if you should feel yourself tempted to enter into any similar explanation of the *miraculous conception*.

Your Lordship had done much better to have kept to the original idea of the Platonic fathers, which was, not that the generation of the Son was the necessary, or voluntary, effect of any exertion of the Father's intellect, but that he was that *intellect*, or his *reason itself*. This appears to have been very nearly the idea of Bishop Sherlock, who says that *the Son is the Father's reflex knowledge*; so that he understood the doctrine of the Platonic fathers much better than your Lordship. To this, however, one of his answerers in the Unitarian Tracts, vol. i. makes a very pertinent reply, similar to what I have just observed with respect to your Lordship's peculiar idea. "But the Son," says he, "being an infinite and most perfect mind, is undoubtedly able to reflect upon his own wisdom and knowledge; and thus, as well as the Father, to beget a son; and this second son in the trinity may, by the same means and reason, beget another, and so onwards to infinity. Thus, according to this maxim, that what are *faculties* in us are *persons* in God, there may be, nay there must be, an infinite number of persons in God. Apage!" A Defence of the brief History of the Unitarians against Dr. Sherlock's Answer in his Vindication of the Holy Trinity, p. 28.

If I could suppose that your Lordship had ever looked into such books as these Unitarian Tracts, which have been published about a century, I could almost think that you had borrowed your idea from

this anonymous answerer of Bishop Sherlock, who puts that construction upon his words, though they do not appear to me necessarily to imply what he deduces from them. For he supposes, with your Lordship, that the Son was produced by a *reflection upon the Father's knowledge*; whereas the Bishop makes him to be his *reflex knowledge* itself.

As to what your Lordship says of my *rash defiance*, which I have again the rashness to repeat, let our readers now judge. "Dr. Priestley's rash defiance, p. 476, I may place among the specimens with which his History, and his Letters to me abound, of his incompetency in this subject, and of the effrontery of that incurable ignorance, which is ignorant even of its own want of knowledge." Many persons will be of opinion that the *ignorance* (which your Lordship describes as itself *ignorant*) and also that the *effrontery* (or *boldness*, which I suppose is itself *bold*,) of which you here speak are, indeed, to their great surprise, to be found *somewhere:* but it will now be evident that they are not with *me*.

As this letter relates to a subject which many persons will not be able to *contemplate* with much gravity, I shall subjoin to it another article of a similar nature.

This controversy affords many instances of different persons being very differently affected by the same representation of things. Your Lordship says in your Note, p. 49, That God saying *Let us make man*, Gen. i. 26. "describes a *consultation* between the persons of the Godhead," and that "this is shown with great brevity, but with the highest degree of evidence and perspicuity, by Dr. Kennicott." Now, my Lord, had any person besides a Trinitarian suggested the idea,

of any thing that could be called a *consultation*, being held by the three persons in the Godhead, you would have said that it was *blasphemous*; since a consultation among different persons implies a previous *ignorance* of each other's sentiments, and something like *debate*; and consequently *difference of opinion*; and that in a consultation among *three* persons, if a proposal did not please any one of them, the other two would carry it by a majority. But, the idea being suggested by yourselves, you see nothing absurd in what is most obviously and most ridiculously so.

I would further observe, that a consultation among the persons of the trinity clearly supposes the same *distinction* in *these persons* as that which subsists in any *three men*, each of whom has a train of thinking peculiar to himself, and independent of those trains that are going on in the minds of the other two; so that, whatever they be *called*, they must in reality be *three Gods*. If, however, such a consultation may, "with the highest degree of *evidence*, and even *perspicuity*," as your Lordship says, be inferred from this phraseology of Moses, is it not a little extraordinary that no Jew ever made the same inference from the passage? I am, &c.

LETTER IX.

Of the Church of Orthodox Jewish Christians at Jerusalem, and of the Veracity of Origen.

My Lord,

To make it appear at all probable that the doctrine of the trinity was taught by the apostles, your Lordship

has very justly thought it necessary to find it among the Jewish converts, who cannot be supposed to have altogether abandoned the faith which they received from them. That many of them were so far from receiving this doctrine that they held it in abhorrence, you cannot deny; but your Lordship maintains that, notwithstanding this, there was a church of Trinitarian Jews at Jerusalem even subsequent to the time of Adrian; and because what Origen, who must have known the fact, says concerning the Jewish christians is inconsistent with such a supposition, you scruple not to call him *a wilful liar*. To silence "an adversary," you say, (Letters, p. 260) "he had recourse to the wilful and deliberate allegation of a notorious falsehood*."

Origen evidently makes all the Jewish christians to have been *Ebionites*, and the Ebionites to have been of *two kinds*, viz. those who held the doctrine of the miraculous conception, and those who denied it; but he says that neither of them admitted the divinity of Christ. So positive a testimony as this, from so respectable a character, (the most so, I will venture to say, that his age, or that any age can boast,) one would have thought could not have failed to have some weight with persons who had not entirely bid farewell to shame, and who were not determined to support a hypothesis *at any rate*. It is not only the testimony of a man of the greatest purity of character in all respects, but delivered in the face of all the world, who could not but have known it to be a falsehood if it had

* As this is nothing less than the *lie direct*, it may be well for his Lordship of St. David's that Origen is not now living, and actuated by the modern notions of *honour*.

been one; and therefore could not have had any other effect than to expose himself. It is in fact to suppose that a man of the greatest integrity in the world would tell a lie in circumstances in which the greatest liar would have told the truth.

This account which Origen has given of the Ebionites is also given by him as an express contradiction to what his adversary had said with respect to a *known fact*, his ignorance of which he is exposing. Would he, then, have knowingly exposed himself to the charge of purposely misrepresenting the very thing which he was there charging his enemy with misrepresenting? Moreover, this treatise of Origen was written by him *late in life*, and is the most elaborate of all his compositions; so that there can be no doubt of its having been written with the greatest circumspection. It is a defence of christianity, then persecuted, against the heathens who were its persecutors. In these circumstances, would not a heathen philosopher have rejoiced to expose such a writer as Origen, and the cause in which he was engaged; glad as the heathens always were to load the christians with unmerited calumnies of the most atrocious kind?

If ever any man had a motive to keep himself within the bounds of truth, it was Origen in this particular case, a man who was considered as at the head of the christians, and of whom the greatest men which that and the following age produced, such as Dionysius of Alexandria, Firmilian of Cappadocia, and Gregory of Neocæsarea, were the greatest admirers. Would such men as these have been so wonderfully attached, as they are known to have been, to Origen, if he had been a *wilful liar*?

Can it then be supposed that such a man as this, in the circumstances in which he wrote, would have asserted concerning the Jewish christians in general, that they were all Unitarians, though some of them were believers in the miraculous conception, if it had been notorious (as, if it had been true, it must have been,) that there was then existing a whole church of Trinitarian Jewish christians in Judæa, the country in which he resided a great part of his time, and in which he probably wrote this very treatise? Such a church, especially in Jerusalem, could not but have been highly respected, as the common mother of all christian churches. Could he also have said of these Jewish christians that they adhered to the peculiar laws of their ancestors, when it could not but have been equally notorious that they had deserted them?

If we look into history, we shall find no mention of any such church of Trinitarian Jewish christians who had abandoned the institutions of Moses, or of the bishops of it, though many transactions are recorded in which they could not but have been concerned in common with other churches and their bishops. And if these Jewish christians formed a church, it must have been separate from the Greek church, and have had separate bishops; for the congregation could not have understood the Greek language.

This circumstance your Lordship entirely overlooked when you asserted, Letters, p. 59, that these Hebrew christians were of the "church of Jerusalem, when that church was under the government of bishops of the uncircumcision." What connexion could they have with a church the public service of which they could not have understood? Worshipping in an un-

known tongue was hardly introduced at so early a period. And least of all can it be supposed that the Jews would have abandoned a language so respectable for its antiquity and sacredness as their own, for the Greek or any other whatever.

All the accounts of the destruction of Jerusalem by Adrian are such as are absolutely inconsistent with the supposition of the existence of any such church. They all say, that after this event *no Jew*, without making any exception in favour of christian Jews, was allowed to remain in the place; and they expressly speak of the *new church* which was formed in the place, as consisting *wholly of Gentiles*, persons who made use of the Greek language, Marcus being their first bishop. All modern historians of credit, such as Fleury and Tillemont, as much interested as yourself to find an orthodox Jewish church at Jerusalem, or any where else, understood these historians exactly as I do.

To this mass of evidence from the clearest facts and the strongest probabilities, your Lordship opposes what is most likely to have been a mere idle story picked up by Epiphanius, of Aquila (the same who translated the scriptures from Hebrew into Greek) being appointed by Adrian to survey the works which he was erecting at Jerusalem, and being converted to christianity by Jews who had returned from Pella; though he expressly says that this return was after the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, and not after the dispersion by Adrian.

You now say, p. 371, "But the question is not at what time the Jewish christians whom Aquila found at Ælia had returned thither, but at what time he conversed with them. Epiphanius says he conversed with

them at the time that he was superintendant of Adrian's works at Ælia. At that time, therefore, there were Hebrew christians settled at Ælia, or they could not then have conversed with Aquila."

But surely, my Lord, as I observed before, (Third Set of Letters, p. 368,) though you have not thought proper to notice it, "it must be of consequence to this argument to know whether Aquila was residing at Jerusalem after the destruction of that city by Adrian; and this is more than Epiphanius says, or is at all probable in itself. For the rebuilding of Jerusalem by Adrian, in which Aquila is supposed to have been employed by him, was undertaken in the thirteenth year of his reign, a year before the revolt of the Jews, and it was not till the eighteenth of Adrian that they were entirely subdued."

Your Lordship may well say that I have embarrassed your argument with *chronological difficulties*; and when chronology is against a man, he is naturally against chronology. Find, if you can, any evidence of Adrian carrying on any works at Jerusalem after the destruction of that city by him; or find, if you can, in any writer, of more or less credit, the mention of Aquila, or of any Jew whatever, employed by Adrian or not, as residing in Jerusalem after that event. Your argument requires that there should be both christian Jews, and Aquila to be converted by them, at a period when I assert, on the authority of all ancient historians, and in no contradiction even to Epiphanius, your own authority, that neither Aquila to be converted, nor any Jewish christians to convert him, could have been in the place. Let the reader now judge which of us two gets rid of our difficulties, as you say, p. 371, "by

making positive testimony submit to our theories." What I say is from the clearest and most indisputable testimony; and what you say is from *theory only*, unsupported by any testimony whatever, nay in direct contradiction to every testimony which those times furnish.

"I maintain," you say, p. 371, "that there is no reason to believe that the Hebrew christians quietly settled at Ælia before the Jewish rebellion were included in Adrian's edict for the banishment of the Jews." But were not Hebrew christians *Hebrews*, or *Jews*? and were not *all the Jews*, without any distinction of christians or no christians, banished both from that place, and from the district, by Adrian?

Your Lordship's attachment to *theory*, and your inattention to *facts*, in this case, is not a little curious. To make Jerusalem a safe asylum for the christian Jews after the revolt of their countrymen, you suppose, what is indeed probable enough, that the christians had no concern in it. But that they were *noticed* and *favoured* by the emperor on that account, is a mere conjecture. You add that, "had they not discarded the Jewish rites they might have been mistaken for Jews;" and therefore, following your *theory*, according to which they were *not* mistaken for Jews, and neglecting all authority from *fact*, and contrary both to all probability and the uniform testimony of all antiquity, you say they *had* discarded those rites; which is nothing more than an *inference from a conjecture*.

On the contrary, all antiquity says that the Jewish christians, without making any distinction, were rigorously attached to the observance of their law. Nothing can be more evident than that they were so during all the time of the apostles; who also, Paul himself not

excepted, conformed to every punctilio of the Mosaic ritual, and never authorized any beside the Gentile converts to neglect it. A system of peculiar rites is, I doubt not, to distinguish that remarkable nation, christians or not, to the end of time; and without being confounded with the rest of the world, they are to be, if there be any truth in prophecy, the most distinguished nation upon earth. Of this I think I have given sufficient proof in the *Theological Repository*, a work from which you, my Lord, though a bishop, might learn much, though it is not probable you ever will.

After these observations I submit the following curious paragraph of your Lordship's, p. 499, to the inspection of our readers: "The disturbed foundations of the church of Ælia are again settled. I could wish to trust them to their own solidity to withstand any future attacks. I could wish to take my final leave of this unpleasing task of hunting an uninformed uncandid adversary through the mazes of his blunders, and the subterfuges of his sophistry. But I have found by the experience of this conflict, that a person once engaged in controversy is not entirely at liberty to choose for himself to what length he will carry the dispute, and when he will desist. I perceive that I was guilty of an indiscretion in discovering an early aversion to the continuance of the contest. My adversary perhaps would have been less hardy in assertion, and more circumspect in argument, had I not given him reason to expect that every assertion would pass uncontradicted, and every argument uncanvassed. Unambitious as I therefore still remain of the honour of the last word, be it however understood that, if Dr. Priestley should

think proper to make any further defence, or any new attack, I am not pledged either to reply, or be silent."

My Lord, in humble imitation of your Lordship's style, I will say, the foundations of your church of Trinitarian Jews at Jerusalem, after the time of Adrian, are again, and, I will venture to say, *for ever*, overturned; and a church, the foundations of which were attempted to be laid on the grossest calumny, and on the ruins of the fairest character that christian history has to exhibit, could not expect any better fate. And it has fallen where it ought to have done, on the head of the architect. To this *hardiness of assertion*, of an *uninformed* and *uncandid adversary*, it is perfectly indifferent, to *himself*, whether your Lordship reply, or be silent. He only wishes to have a reply, because he is persuaded that the great *cause* which you oppose will be promoted by it.

If your Lordship should make a fresh attempt to rebuild this favourite church, I hope you will lay its foundations deeper than on an idle story of Epiphanius. For it is not very probable that such a man as Aquila, a Jew, and a translator of the scriptures, consequently a studious and pious man, should have been employed by Adrian in superintending any works of *building* or *fortification*; without considering what you add to this account, or rather in contradiction of it, that this was when all Jews were banished from the place, and Adrian had no works to construct there.

If, however, you will, for want of a better, build on so precarious an authority as this, at least take the pains to understand your author; and also condescend to give some small degree of attention to the humble subject of *chronology*. Otherwise, how pompously

and magisterially soever your Lordship may write, *a plain tale* will be sufficient to *put you down.*

As to your other proofs of the want of veracity in Origen, I am very willing to abide by the defence that I have already made of him in my Third Set of Letters to you. Let our readers judge between us. I shall only observe that, supposing you to have proved all that you there pretend, it would amount to nothing more than such trifling oversights and inconsistences as the wisest and best of men, and especially voluminous writers, must be subject to, and such as by no means affect a man's character for *veracity*. It is not from things of so slight a nature as these that you can be authorized to suppose, or suspect, that such a man as Origen would be guilty of so flagrant a violation of truth in the circumstances which I have stated, as you have had the assurance to charge him with.

Your Lordship now joins *me* with *Origen*, considering us as so much alike, that you say, p. 488, "This art, which Dr. Priestley is so apt to employ, of reducing an argument which he would refute by well-managed abridgements to a form in which it may be capable of refutation, indicates so near a resemblance between the characters of Origen, and his *Hyperaspistes*, in the worst part of Origen's, that perhaps I might not be altogether unjustifiable were I to apply to the squire the words which Mosheim so freely uses of the knight, EGO HUIC TESTI, ETIAMSI JURATO, QUI TAM MANIFESTO FUMOS VENDIT, ME NON CREDITURUM ESSE CONFIRMO."

To this conjunction of myself with Origen I heartily say, Amen. May my character be that of this great man, with all his faults! and then it will be as far re-

moved as I wish it to be from that of the present Bishop of St. David's, whom I scruple not once more to call (as I have abundantly proved the truth of the accusation) *a falsifier* (though I believe not a wilful falsifier) *of history, and a defamer of the character of the dead.*

To show that I am not ambitious of having the last word, except where I have something of importance to add, I also freely submit to our readers what your Lordship has added in your sixth Dissertation concerning *Jerom's orthodox Hebrew christians*, in answer to the fourth of my Third Set of Letters. That the Ebionites and Nazarenes were only two names for the same set of people, and that they were all, as far as we know, believers in the simple humanity of Christ, I have abundantly proved in my History of early Opinions concerning Jesus Christ; and certainly your Lordship's not choosing to look into that work cannot be called an *answer* to it. Till I do see something at least *plausibly* advanced in answer to what I have there alleged, I shall think it unnecessary to say any thing further on the subject.

I am, &c.

LETTER X.

The Conclusion.

My Lord,

This controversy will, I hope, teach your Lordship and others, that whatever effect a bold, contemptuous, and imposing manner may have in *conversation*, it is

attended with no lasting advantage in *writing*, when the big words and haughty airs may be examined at leisure, and their insignificance be seen through. Your Lordship's insolence has exceeded that of Warburton; but even his learning was not able to gain any lasting credit to the strange paradoxes that he advanced. They served to amuse his cotemporaries, but are now almost sunk into oblivion. What, then, will be the fate of your Lordship's paradoxical assertions, still more extravagant than his, advanced with greater effrontery, and yet destitute of the least support in a real knowledge of antiquity?

On some of the subjects on which your Lordship advanced to the charge with the greatest confidence, my replies have been so effectual, that you have not attempted any defence, especially with respect of that passage of Athanasius, in which he accounts for the great number of Unitarians in the age of the apostles, by saying that "the Jewish christians were so firmly persuaded that their Messiah was to be a mere man, that the apostles themselves were obliged to use great caution in divulging the doctrine of the divinity of Christ." This was the construction that Beausobre, Dr. Lardner, and I believe every other person who has quoted the passage, put upon it, though, contrary to all probability, you have maintained that he meant the *unbelieving Jews* only, with respect to whom the observation was wholly impertinent.

I have clearly shown, by a series of quotations from writers of a very early to those of a very late period, that what I have ascribed to Athanasius was the idea of the christian writers in general, and especially that of Chrysostom; so that I think it will hardly be dis-

puted again; and yet what exclamations did not you and your worthy ally, Mr. Badcock, make upon that subject, as if I wilfully misconstrued the passage! But they were the exclamations of ignorance.

On this subject your Lordship has very prudently chosen to be silent. An ingenuous mind, however, would candidly acknowledge the force of an argument to which he was not able to reply. It has more than once been done by Dr. Price, but not once by the Bishop of St. David's; and this is a circumstance that marks *greatness of mind* in the one, and *littleness* in the other.

I shall further observe, at the close of this set of Letters, that the haughtiness your Lordship has assumed as *a churchman*, and the contempt with which you have always affected to speak of *Dissenters*, does not become a man whose grandfather, if I have not been misinformed, was a dissenting minister, and whose father was educated for one. But perhaps this very circumstance may lead to the true cause of the phænomenon; for such is its operation on some minds. Where the suspicion of a leaning to an old connexion will naturally fall, they think they can never do enough to guard against that suspicion.

This controversy, I imagine, has not tended to recommend the Dissenters to your Lordship. It is said that since you have been Bishop of St. David's you have refused to ordain any person educated in the school of a Dissenter, particularly a most respectable one, which has supplied the diocese with many of its most valuable clergymen; alleging that, though they had received nothing more than classical learning from Dissenters, they would be too friendly to them. It

looks as if in every Dissenter your Lordship dreaded a scourge to yourself. Your Lordship's diocese, however, is said to abound with them, and on this account you will probably consider it as another *Augean stable.* But it is not a *Hercules* that is sent to it; and I will venture to predict that the number of Dissenters will not be lessened by your Lordship's means, any more than the number of Unitarians in this country by your controversy with me.

Some time ago your Lordship advertised something on the subject of the *Corporation and Test Acts*, but it was suppressed. Now is the time to bring it forward; and we Dissenters wish much to see it; not doubting but that, like every other production of your Lordship's pen, it will, with respect both to *sentiment* and *language*, be a curiosity of its kind.

From the manner in which I have taken the liberty to address your Lordship on every subject on which you have thought proper to resume the controversy between us, (and having had your choice, it cannot be doubted but that you have aimed at what you thought to be the most *vulnerable parts,)* your Lordship may be confident that it will be taken for granted that you will make a reply, if you think it possible to make one with effect; especially as you now say that you are no longer *pledged to be silent*, and you condemn your former imprudence in prematurely declaring that you would not continue this controversy.

Come forth then again, my Lord, and to all your powers of *language* be pleased to add those of *argument.* If you have hitherto only trifled, as an *indolent* man naturally might do, with an *uninformed adversary* unfortunately *ignorant of his own ignorance,* (in which,

however, your Lordship has obligingly taken some pains to instruct him,) trifle no longer. You must by this time have seen the inconvenience of it. To use your own high Platonic language, Come forth with the full *projection of all your energies*, and, if possible, overwhelm me at once. Consider, my Lord, that while, in the late war, America was thus trifled with, it was lost; and take warning by that example. That, my Lord, was a fatal blow to your system of *diocesan episcopacy*, and an unanswerable argument against all that you can allege in favour of the necessity, or expediency, of the *establishment of any form of religion by civil power.*

Build once more, if your Lordship can any where find materials, your favourite church of orthodox Jewish christians at Jerusalem, or assail once more the character of Origen. Bring new arguments to prove that Tertullian's *idiotæ* were English *idiots*, or describe the curious process by which a father may generate a son by contemplating his own perfections. You have topics enow, my Lord, before you, and some of them must not be unworthy of your Lordship's wonderful talents.

As a stimulus to your Lordship, and others in your church who ought to be equally zealous in the cause of orthodoxy, I shall remind you of the animated exhortation to the study of the christian fathers with which Cave concludes the *Prolegomena* to his *Historia Literaria.*

Having shown the importance of these studies with respect to the *Catholics*, he adds, "Nor* are new ar-

* Neque ad prosequendum hoc nobile institutum nova nobis desunt argumenta, præsertim ab infausta illa ingeniorum nostri temporis in κακοδοξιαν prurigine quæ tot antiquas hæreses ecclesiæ catholicæ judicio constanter damnatas, ab orco revocavit. Po-

guments wanting to the prosecution of these studies, especially from the unhappy itch of heterodoxy in persons of our own age, which has revived so many ancient heresies which had been constantly condemned by the church. The disciples of Arius, or rather of Photinus, are extending themselves every where. Seeing their cause condemned by the tribunal of the primitive church, they attack antiquity itself, and trample upon the venerable witnesses of the primitive faith.

"The Nicene creed is a constant beam in the eyes of these men, and they treat Athanasius, Hilary, and the other champions of it, worse than dogs or serpents.

mœria sua longe lateque nuper apud nos dilatarunt famosissimi hæresiarchæ Alexandrini discipuli, seu Photini potius gregales et asseclæ; qui cum videant pro veteris ecclesiæ tribunali se causam suam sustinere non posse, in ipsam insurgunt antiquitatem, et venerandos primævæ fidei testes lacerant, conculcant, execrantur.

Perpetua his hominibus sudes in oculis Nicæna fides, cujus hyperaspistas Athanasium, Hilarium, &c. cane pejus et angue traducunt odio. Habent quidem suam quam jactitant antiquitatem, sed antiqui illius serpentis progeniem. Suos habent patres, sed quos? Ebionem, Cerinthum, Symmachum, Theodotionem, Paulum Samosatenum, Photinum, et alios. Hos venditant præcursores suos; his fidei parentibus Unitarii nostri gloriantur. Catholicos aut aperte rejiciunt, aut eorum testimonia sophisticis argutiis illudunt, aut, quod caput est, in suas sæpenumero partes pertrahere nituntur.

Evigilandum igitur studiosæ juventuti totisque viribus scriptis veterum gnaviter incumbendum, ut his armis muniti adversariorum tela retundant, sophismata solvant, et ecclesiæ catholicæ, ac proinde Anglicanæ, causam feliciter propugnent. State super vias et videte, et interrogate de semitis antiquis, quæ sit via bona, et ambulate in ea. Jerem. vi. 16. Hæc nobis serpentum latibula monstrabit, hæc ad ipsissimum veritatis fontem nos recta ducet. Claudam hæc optimis Tertulliani verbis: De Præscript. Hæret. c. xxi. p. 209. Si hæc ita sunt, constat omnem doctrinam quæ cum ecclesiis apostolicis matricibus et originalibus fidei conspiret veritati deputandum; sine dubio tenentem quod ecclesiæ ab apostolis, apostoli a Christo, Christus a Deo accepit; omnem vero doctrinam de mendacio præjudicandam quæ sapiat contra veritatem ecclesiarum et apostolorum et Christi et Dei.—Ibid. c. xxxvi. p. 215. Age jam qui voles curiositatem melius exercere in negotio salutis tuæ, percurre ecclesias,

They however boast of their antiquity, but it is the offspring of the old serpent. They have their *fathers*, but whom? Ebion, Cerinthus, Symmachus, Theodotion, Paulus Samosatensis, Photinus, and others. These they boast of as their predecessors, and the fathers of their faith. As to the Catholic writers, they either reject them, elude the force of their arguments by sophistry, or, what is more extraordinary, endeavour to draw them over to their party.

"Our studious youth, therefore, must be exhorted to be upon the watch, and must apply with all their might to the works of the ancients; that, protected by

apostolicas, apud quas ipsæ adhuc cathedræ apostolorum suis locis præsident, apud quas ipsæ authenticæ literæ eorum recitantur, sonantes vocem, et repræsentantes faciem uniuscujusque. Advers. Marcion, l. iv. c. 5. p. 415. Alibique, In summa, si constat id verius quod prius, id prius quod et ab initio, id ab initio quod ab apostolis; pariter utique constabit id esse ab apostolis traditum, quod apud ecclesias apostolorum fuerit sacrosanctum.

His igitur armis optime instructi simus, parati semper nostra tueri, iisque respondere, qui fidei nostræ (quam vere primitivam, catholicam, apostolicam esse sancte profitemur) rationem requisiverint. Neque enim is est ecclesiæ nostræ status, ut pro summo purioris antiquitatis tribunali causam dicere defugiamus. Facessat a nobis inutilis omnis studiorum ratio, facessant difficiles nugæ, implacabiles rixæ, leves et ludicræ disputatiunculæ; ætatem teramus non in foro et prætoriis, non agyrtarum more sursum et deorsum cursitantes, non apud magnatum limina sordidis obsequiis gratiam et favorem aucupantes, verum in rostris, in ambone, intra bibliothecæ denique clathros et cancellos, ecclesiæ commodo, animarum saluti, antiquitatis cognitioni, bonisque literis promovendis, gnaviter incumbentes. Quin ergo agite vosmet et ad sacra hæc studia totis viribus, omnibus nervis contendite; vos, inquam, maxime, quibus melior indoles et liberius otium; dignitatibus ornati, reditibus aucti, quos tanquam meliorum literarum præmia et cumulatiores diligentiæ stimulos et incitamenta majorum pietas consecravit. Vigeat apud nos pietatis et literarum ecclesiasticarum studium; sint in æterna memoria venerandi ecclesiæ catholicæ patres; sit scriptis eorum summus honor et æstimatio, quorum notitiam si hæc quam contulimus symbola vel tantillum promovebit, præclare mecum agi putem, meque bonas horas bene collocasse judicabo.

these arms, they may repel the attacks of their adversaries, answer their sophistry, and successfully defend the cause of the Catholic, and consequently that of the English, church. *Stand ye in the way and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein.* Jeremiah vi. 16. These writings will show us the lurking-holes of the serpents. These will bring us to the very fountain of truth.

"I shall conclude with an excellent passage from Tertullian: 'If these things be so, it is plain that whatever opinion agrees with the apostolic churches, where our faith originated, it is to be considered as *true*; since they, no doubt, hold what the church received from the apostles, the apostles from Christ, and Christ from God. And every doctrine is to be considered as *false*, which is contrary to that truth which was taught by the churches, by the apostles, by Christ, and by God. You, therefore, who wish to exercise your curiosity in things relating to your salvation, visit the apostolical churches, where the chairs of the apostles still are, and where their authentic letters are read, so that you seem to see and hear them in person. De Præscriptione, cap. xxi. xxxvi. Upon the whole, if that be true which was the most ancient, and that be the most ancient which was from the beginning, and that was from the beginning which was from the apostles, it will be equally evident that that was from the apostles which is held sacred in the apostolical churches.' Adv. Marcionem, l. iv. c. 5.

"Furnished with these arms, let us defend our own principles, and answer those who ask a reason of our faith, which we profess to be that which is truly primitive, catholic, and apostolic. Such are our principles,

that we have no reason to decline the discussion of them before the tribunal of the purest antiquity. Let us then abandon all useless pursuits, knotty trifles, violent contentions, ridiculous and absurd disputations; and let us pass our time, not in places of public business or diversion, running about like buffoons, attending the levees of the great, and courting their favour; but in pulpits, in cathedral chairs, and in the recesses of our libraries; diligently applying to those studies which have for their object the good of the church, the salvation of souls, the knowledge of antiquity, and all useful literature.

"Do you especially apply to these sacred studies with all your might, who are blessed with ability and leisure, who are high in rank, and in the possession of those emoluments which the piety of our ancestors has consecrated as the rewards of useful learning, and excitements to greater diligence. Let us distinguish ourselves by piety and sacred literature. Let the venerable fathers of the Catholic church be in everlasting remembrance with us, and let their writings be held in the highest honour and esteem. If my writings shall contribute in the least to our better acquaintance with theirs, I shall think that I have not laboured in vain."

This exhortation of this most excellent man, whose writings, allowing for his prejudices, I highly value, and endeavour to make the best use of, has not been sufficiently attended to by those to whom it was addressed. There would not else have been such a want of learned champions in this controversy, so few who have ventured at all upon the ground on which I have invited them to meet me; and we should not have had such crude opinions as have been advanced by your

Lordship, by Mr. Howes, and by Dr. Knowles, who are the only persons of your church who have come upon it; thinking, no doubt, that they had some more knowledge of these matters than their brethren, at least more than myself, who have no access to your libraries, and none of those incitements which this writer mentions. If *we* apply to these studies from the pure love of truth, what may not be expected from the members of your church, who have every motive that heaven and earth can hold out to you to go beyond us in them? Let not then the voice of friends and enemies, who concur in the same exhortation, be heard in vain.

If the general motives above mentioned be not sufficient, let particular premiums be proposed in your universities for those who shall give proofs of their proficiency in these studies, and who shall give the best answers to the arguments of Unitarians, from the state of things in primitive times. This is now done in Holland, which is less interested in this controversy than Great Britain. Your Lordship being now advanced to one of the highest stations in your church, and possessing more energy of character than other men, will be expected to do something towards the revival of these useful studies; the want of which you must by this time, whether you will confess it or not, have sufficiently felt. In this one thing then, my Lord, let us act in concert; and if you have any generosity in your nature, lay open the stores of learning locked up at Oxford and Cambridge to us poor sectaries. Let the universities, supported at the national expense, be free to every inhabitant of Great Britain, and of the world. Throw down the illiberal guard of your *subscriptions to articles of faith* at matriculation or gra-

duation; and then we shall see who will make the best use of those noble advantages which now, with so much vigilant jealousy, you keep to yourselves.

If you want a further motive, consider, my Lord, not only what, with so much justice and energy, your Lordship formerly urged concerning the obligation incumbent on all persons of your Lordship's high station in the church to defend the establishment which supports you, but also the peculiar light in which you have been placed with respect to this very controversy.

It is said that your Lordship's bishopric was given you as a reward for your services in the defence of orthodoxy; though wisdom would have dictated that it should have been made to depend upon your final *success* in it. However, you have every motive of *gratitude* to urge you to exert yourself, as much as if your preferment still depended upon it. And consider, my Lord, how much ridicule will be reflected upon yourself, and your benefactors, especially the learned Lord High Chancellor of England, if it should appear that you have been rewarded for a service which you have not been able to perform; and that, by provoking this contest, you have injured the cause of which you are appointed the champion.

Consider also that, high as your past services have justly raised you, your Lordship may still be higher; and to myself it will afford a particular satisfaction to address you in the style of *my Lord, your Grace*, after having passed from plain *dear Sir*, and *reverend Sir*, to that of *my Lord, your Lordship*. But perhaps your Lordship may refrain, from a regard to myself; lest, having been generally considered as the means of your present advancement, I should (being, as you

always represent me, naturally *vain*) be too vain of being the instrument of your further exaltation.

Report says, that one of the wisest of your Lordship's bench generally recommends silence with respect to such writers as myself. He himself religiously observes it.

Absistamus, ait, nam lux inimica propinquat. VIRGIL.

In all events, whether prudence should dictate that it is *a time to speak*, or *a time to be silent*, my motions will, with all just deference, be governed by those of your Lordship; being at all times, and with all due respect,

My Lord,

Your Lordship's most obedient, humble servant,

JOSEPH PRIESTLEY.

APPENDIX,

CONTAINING

LETTERS TO THE BISHOPS,

UPON THE SUBJECT OF THE CONTROVERSY WITH DR. HORSLEY.

By JOSEPH PRIESTLEY, LL.D.F.R.S.

APPENDIX,

CONTAINING

LETTERS TO THE BISHOPS.

LETTER I.

Of the Nature and Importance of the late Controversy concerning the Doctrine of the Trinity.

MY LORDS,

YOU have all been spectators of, and I must presume not unconcerned ones, and one of your body has been a principal actor in, one of the most important controversies that has been agitated in this or in any age of the christian church, as it relates to the great object of our common worship. It is no less than whether that God, who in the scriptures is emphatically styled *The Father*, the *Maker of heaven and earth*, the *only true God*, and also *the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*, be the sole object of our religious addresses; or whether he is to share these divine honours with two other persons, one of them Jesus Christ, called his Son, and the other his Holy Spirit. I have had the honour, as I certainly deem it, to maintain the former; and many of the members of your church, as by law established in this country, together with several who, like myself, dissent from it, have held the latter.

This controversy has now proceeded several years; so that, there being no probability of any thing very considerable being further advanced on either side of

the question, our readers will now be able to form a competent judgement of the merits of the case. Openly or silently, all who have given due attention to the publications on both sides will soon arrange themselves under the Unitarian or Trinitarian standard, not to contend by arms, but, being fully persuaded in their own minds, to adhere firmly to what they think to be the truth. And it may reasonably be expected that, in due time, the practice of all Unitarians will correspond to their professions, and that they will not content themselves with holding *a silent opinion*, but will *confess the truth before men*, giving countenance to no other mode of worship than that which they deem to be authorized by scripture and reason, in obedience to God and to conscience, and disregarding all that men may say of them, or do to them.

There are, we all acknowledge, such crimes as *blasphemy* and *idolatry*. The former is of an indefinite description, but it is generally ascribed to those who derogate from the honour of the true God. With this you may charge me if I do not pay divine honours to Jesus Christ, provided he be *truly God*; and with the same I charge you, if by giving divine honours to a creature you detract from *the honour that belongs to God only*. With *idolatry*, which is paying divine worship to *that which is not God*, you cannot charge me, because the being that I worship is also the object of worship with you; and the far greater part of your public devotions are addressed to no other. But the charge will fall with all its weight upon you, if the Father only be God, and you worship two other persons besides him.

You cannot therefore say that this is a matter of no

great consequence in christianity. It affects the most fundamental principle of all religion, the first and the greatest of all the commandments, which says *Thou shalt have no other God besides me.* And such is the nature of this great doctrine of the *unity of God*, that there never was a departure from it which did not draw after it very alarming practical consequences. The horrors of Gentile idolatry I need not enumerate; and those of Popish idolatry, which began with the worship of Jesus Christ, soon proceeded to that of the virgin Mary, and terminated in as many objects of worship as the heathens ever adored, and sufficiently similar to them.

Different *persons* will always have different *characters* and *offices*, and be entitled to different kinds and degrees of respect; and it is not possible that, if two other persons, besides the God and Father of all, be considered as *divine*, and the proper *objects of worship*, he should not be deprived of some attribute that belongs to him; so that those that make any practical use of the system will, in their own minds, whether they openly declare it or not, divest him of some of those attributes which would render him the object of their greater reverence and love.

This, my Lords, you know, has been not only the tendency but also the actual consequence of the belief of the doctrine of the Trinity, at least with the vulgar. With them mercy is the exclusive attribute of the Son, and a constant invigorating influence the sole province of the Spirit; and nothing but power, and that not of a benevolent and engaging nature, but something unknown and terrific only, is left to the Father. He is not even supposed to be the immediate maker of the

world, and he is believed to have been implacable to his offending creatures till satisfaction was made to his justice by the death of his own son; whereas no mention is ever made of such unrelenting severity in the character of Christ, though he also is said to be *God*, and in all respects *equal to the Father*; and the Holy Spirit is never considered as having had any concern either in forgiving sin, or in procuring forgiveness: Here then you have, in fact, three divine characters as really distinct from each other as those of any three men: and is not this a horrible degradation of the Godhead, perfection not being found in any one of them? It is true that the regards of Protestant Trinitarians are not so much distracted as those of the Popish ones; but the evil is exactly of the same kind, and differs only in degree; and is certainly of great magnitude and extent.

If there be any religious truth of practical importance, next to that of a future state of rewards and punishments, it is that which leads us to consider all adorable and amiable attributes as centring in one undivided being, whom we can look up to as our maker, preserver, and benefactor, the author of all good; who has within himself mercy for the penitent, not requiring to be made placable by the sufferings of another, but by the repentance of the sinner only, and whose constant presence with us is sufficient for all the purposes of providential care respecting the mind or body; so that we have not to look to one divine person for one thing, and to another for something else.

The zeal with which the doctrine of the Trinity has in all ages been defended, and the severe penalties with

which the belief of it has been guarded, in the laws of this country as well as others, sufficiently prove that it always has been considered as a tenet of the greatest consequence. It has, indeed, been guarded and defended in such a manner as christianity itself does not require to be, and would be ashamed of. But all that laws and penalties can do is only to impose *silence*. They cannot enforce *conviction*. On the contrary, wherever they are employed, a suspicion necessarily arises that the proper instrument of conviction, viz. *rational evidence*, was not to be had. For no man, in dealing with his fellow creatures, would ever have recourse to compulsion if he thought that persuasion would be sufficient.

Such being the acknowledged importance of the article of faith now contended for, it has been a subject of controversy from a very early period in the history of the christian church to the present time. But I have been led to investigate the true christian doctrine on this subject in a way which has not been much attended to, but which appears to me to promise a more speedy and decisive determination of the controversy. We all agree to be determined by the *sense of scripture*; but, on account of our preceding prejudices, we are not agreed what this sense is; and experience shows that, when any controversy is to be decided by an attention to *words* and *phrases* only, the decision will long remain in doubt. In matters of religion we see it with respect to all the creeds and articles of faith that have ever been composed by man; and with respect to things of a civil nature in the most explicit acts of parliament, the sense of which is the subject of daily dispute among lawyers.

But, my Lords, there is another, and, as I have said, an easier and surer method of ascertaining the true meaning of the scriptures; and that is, to inquire in what sense they were actually understood by those persons for whose use they were written, and by whom nobody will say that they could well be misunderstood in an article of so much consequence as this. This task I have undertaken; and I shall, by way of recapitulation, inform you and the public what has been the result of my investigations, and what has been done by the abettors of the doctrine of the Trinity to invalidate what I have advanced. My appeal will then be to the world, and even to your Lordships.

LETTER II.

A Review of the Controversy with the Bishop of St. David's.

My Lords,

What I undertook to prove, from what is now extant concerning the state of opinions in early times, was, that the faith of the primitive church was Unitarian. On the contrary, Bishop Horsley said that it must have been Trinitarian, because that doctrine appears in the writings of Barnabas and Ignatius. To this I answered that, admitting the pieces ascribed to them to be genuine in the main, they bear evident marks of interpolation in what relates to this subject, as is acknowledged by the most judicious critics; and therefore that his argument can have no weight. To

this the Bishop has not thought proper to make any reply.

I advanced, in agreement with the general strain of ecclesiastical historians, that the Ebionites and Nazarenes were Jewish christians of the earliest age, and did not believe the divinity of Christ, but held him to be simply a man inspired of God. On the contrary, Bishop Horsley said, that those who were called *Ebionites* did not exist in the age of the apostles; and also that, though they believed the simple humanity of Christ, they probably held some mysterious exaltation of his nature after his ascension, which made him the object of prayer to them. This opinion, which I believe is peculiar to himself, I showed him to be destitute of all evidence, or probability;—and to this he has made no reply.

As to the *Nazarenes*, (which I think I have sufficiently proved to have been nothing more than another name for the *Ebionites*, or the Jewish christians in general,) Bishop Horsley strangely advanced that they did not exist till after the time of Adrian; and that they had their name from Nazareth, the place where they settled after they were then driven from Jerusalem; and he says that they were believers in the divinity of Christ. On the contrary, I have clearly shown that the Nazarenes were believers in the simple humanity of Christ; and that, according to all the writers of antiquity, they certainly existed in the age of the apostles; and that, as to his history of their expulsion from Jerusalem by Adrian, their settling at Nazareth, and deriving their name from that circumstance, they are wholly inventions of his own, without

the appearance of authority from any ancient writer; —and to this he has made no reply.

Bishop Horsley, to support the orthodoxy of the Jewish christians, maintains that there was a whole church of them, and speaks of their bishops as existing at Jerusalem after the time of Adrian; alleging that the body of Jewish christians, who had till this time adhered to the laws of Moses, abandoned them after the destruction of that place, in order to enjoy the privileges of the Ælian colony settled there by Adrian. And because Origen asserts that all the Jewish christians were Unitarians, and had not abandoned the laws and customs of their ancestors, Bishop Horsley scruples not to say of this great and upright man that he must have known the contrary, and therefore asserted a wilful falsehood. On the contrary, I have evidently shown, from every history of that transaction now extant, as they are understood by every modern writer of credit, that Adrian expelled all the Jews, without making any exception in favour of christians, from Jerusalem; that the christian church afterwards settled there consisted wholly of Gentiles; and that the testimony of Origen, agreeing with this, is highly worthy of credit. So that the Bishop, who has impeached this great man, must be considered by all impartial persons as *a falsifier of history*, and a *defamer of the character of the illustrious dead*, in order to serve his purpose. To this charge, so materially affecting his own character, the Bishop has made some attempt to reply; but in so weak and ineffectual a manner, that I will venture to say that henceforth the veracity of Origen will remain unimpeached, and Dr. Horsley's church of

Trinitarian Jews at Jerusalem after the time of Adrian will be considered as a mere chimæra. Consequently, the unitarianism of the early Jewish christians, which, when it is considered, must draw after it the belief of the truth of the Unitarian doctrine, remains fully established.

Bishop Horsley maintains that, though he finds no Unitarians in the apostolic age, they are censured by the apostle John in the phrase of Christ *coming in the flesh.* This phrase I have shown to relate to the Gnostics only, notwithstanding the Bishop's endeavour in his last publication to support his opinion.

Having proved that the great body of christians in early times were Unitarians, it follows that they could not have been considered as *heretics*, or persons out of communion with the catholic church. On the contrary, Bishop Horsley maintained that the Unitarians were always considered as heretics, and that they were by Justin Martyr included among those heretics whom he charges with blasphemy. But I have shown that, in these passages, Justin most clearly alludes to the Gnostics only; and that, though no Unitarian himself, he spake with great respect of those who were so. On this subject the Bishop has not made any defence, and I am confident he will not be able to make any that shall be thought even plausible. I have shown by a variety of evidence, that the great body of unlearned christians continued to be Unitarians long after many of the learned christians adopted the notion of a Trinity, which, as I have clearly shown, was derived from no other source than the Platonic philosophy, to which they were unhappily attached; that the term *heresy* was long used as synonymous to *Gnosticism*; and that,

from long use, it even continued to be taken in that sense after the Unitarian doctrine was condemned by public councils.

Having shown from Tertullian that those whom he calls *Idiotæ* (who he says were the greater part of christians) conceived the greatest dread of the doctrine of the Trinity, Bishop Horsley maintains that by *Idiotæ* he only meant such as were so *ignorant*, and *stupid*, as to deserve to be called *idiots*. On the contrary I have shown, with the authority of the learned Dr. Bentley, and every critic of the least eminence, that among the ancients the word *Idiota* was never used of persons who were *stupid*, or *deficient in point of understanding*, but only of *unlearned persons*, or *persons in the common or lower ranks of life*. This affecting the Bishop's character as a scholar, he has, in his last publication, greatly laboured his defence; but still without being able to produce a single passage from any ancient writer, in which the word *Idiota* can be understood in his sense of it. It is indeed in the highest degree improbable that Tertullian, or any man, should really mean to assert concerning the greater part of christians, or indeed of any large body of men, that they were *deficient in natural understanding*; or, if they had asserted it, it could not have been entitled to credit. Consequently the testimony of Tertullian, reluctantly given no doubt, to the Unitarianism of the great body of unlearned christians, remains unimpeached.

I quoted a passage from Athanasius, in which he says that the Jews were so fully persuaded of the simple humanity of their Messiah, that the apostles did not think it prudent to inform them of his pre-existence or

divinity, and that the Gentiles receiving christianity from the Jews learned the same unitarian doctrine. By these *Jews* Bishop Horsley maintains we are to understand *unbelieving Jews*, and by the Gentiles such unbelieving Gentiles as learned from the Jews that the Messiah was to be a man. Improbable as this construction is, and the reverse of that of Beausobre and Dr. Lardner, (which however it is probable he had never heard of,) he did not scruple to treat my construction of it as a wilful imposition on the public, and expressed himself in such a manner as to excite sentiments of horror and indignation against me. Notwithstanding this, I supported my construction of this passage by such a mass of evidence of christian writers, both before and after Athanasius, that on this subject he has not ventured to make any defence. And what can we infer from this unanimous acknowledgement of all the ancient Trinitarian writers, that their doctrine was not taught with clearness and effect till it was done by John, after the death of all the other apostles; but that, in their idea, the number of Unitarians in the church was so great, that they could not account for the fact on any other supposition, improbable as it must have appeared even to them? For who can believe that the apostles did not, without reserve, explain *the whole counsel of God?* And how could such important doctrines as those of the pre-existence and divinity of Christ have been made known to some christians and have been concealed from the rest, so that there should be no trace of any question or debate on the subject, and that no Jew should have laid hold of it as an objection to the gospel?

All the ancient christian writers suppose that the

apostles had no idea of Christ being any thing more than a man during all the time of their intercourse with him; and that their knowledge of his pre-existence and divinity was subsequent to the day of Pentecost, the Jews having always been Unitarians, and expecting only a man for their Messiah. On the contrary, Dr. Horsley maintained that the Jews in our Saviour's time were believers in the doctrine of the Trinity; that they expected the second person of it as their Messiah; and consequently that the apostles considered Christ as being God from the time they were convinced of his being the Messiah. I have supported the opinion of the ancient christian writers, by showing, in concurrence with the learned Basnage, (who has taken the greatest pains to investigate their opinions, and who was himself a Trinitarian,) that the Jews, in every period of their history, were believers in the unity of God in such a sense as to exclude all idea of a Trinity, and in the simple humanity of their Messiah. Consequently the apostles must at first have considered Christ as a mere man; and there is no evidence, in their history or their writings, that they ever changed that opinion concerning him. On this subject Bishop Horsley has not thought proper to make any reply.

It is evident to any person the least acquainted with ecclesiastical history, that there was a gradation in the sentiments of learned christians respecting the Logos, and that the first idea of it was that of something emitted from the divine mind, similar to the then supposed emission of a beam of light from the sun. But prior to this emission they considered this logos as the same principle with *reason*, or some other intellectual power necessarily belonging to the Father; so that by *the ge-*

neration of the Son, or the *emission of this logos*, they certainly meant a *change of state*, viz. from a mere *attribute* to a proper *person*; and in their idea this first took place with a view to the creation of the world. Bishop Horsley, however, asserts that the logos was never considered as an attribute of the Deity previous to its assuming a proper personality, but maintains that by the *generation of the Son* was meant the *display of his powers* in the production of material beings. However, this opinion of his is, as far as I know, entirely his own; and such is the evidence that I have produced for the opinion advanced above, in my Letter to him, that he has not thought proper to make any reply. And so full and decisive is the additional evidence that I have brought for it in my *History of early Opinions concerning Christ*, that I am pretty confident it will never be controverted again.

Bishop Horsley is so extremely ignorant of the progress of opinions in early times, that he says there is no difference between the doctrine of the personification of the logos and the peculiar opinions of the Arians. Whereas I have shown that the two schemes were always directly opposed to each other, and are so clearly defined by all the ancient writers, that I believe there is no example of their ever having been confounded or mistaken except by himself. The Arians disclaimed all idea of *personification*, and the doctrine of an *uncreated logos*, holding that the Son was a proper *creature*, being an immaterial principle which supplied the place of a human soul in the body of Jesus; while their orthodox opponents always maintained that the logos, which in its original state had been an uncreated attribute of the Father, was a third principle super-

added to the body and soul of the man Jesus. This I have shown with so much evidence, that the Bishop has not been able to make any reply to it, and I am confident he never will.

Bishop Horsley, at the entrance on this controversy, asserted that it was both the opinion of all the platonizing fathers, and that it is likewise agreeable to the scriptures, that the second person in the Trinity had his origin from the first person "contemplating his own perfections." For this most extraordinary opinion I challenged him to produce any authority, ancient or modern; and this, in his last publication, he has greatly laboured to do: but his attempts have been so ineffectual, that it is impossible to read what he has advanced on the subject without contempt. All the early fathers, that is, all before the Council of Nice, clearly maintained the very reverse of this doctrine, representing the generation of the Son as the *voluntary* act of the Father, and an act exerted *in time*; so that, according to them, there was a time when the Son did not exist *as a son*, but only as the inherent *reason of the Father*. And though the later fathers represented the generation of the Son as a *necessary* act, and something that took place from all eternity, they had by no means the same idea of this production that Dr. Horsley holds forth; so that it must still be considered as a notion of his own, and that it is certainly most arbitrary and ridiculous. He has wisely thought proper to decline all defence of it either from reason or the scriptures.

Bishop Horsley maintains that, though the three persons in the Trinity have each of them all the perfections of Deity, the Father is the *fountain of divinity* to

the two others, and has also some unknown *pre-eminence* over them. On the contrary, I have shown that this *pre-eminence* is inconsistent with any proper *equality*; and that, if the members of this Trinity be properly equal, they must necessarily be *three Gods*, as well as *three persons*. On this subject the Bishop has made no defence, nor is it possible to maintain such an equality of the three persons as is asserted in the Athanasian creed on the supposition of any pre-eminence in the Father; which however is maintained by all the ante-Nicene fathers. The three creeds adopted by the church of England were drawn up at different times, and all contain different and inconsistent doctrines.

As three different persons must have different provinces, Bishop Horsley maintained that prayer for succour in external persecution was "with peculiar propriety addressed to the Son." But I showed that this idea was entirely his own, and that it is destitute of all countenance in scripture precept or example, and also in the primitive times of christianity, all proper prayers having been uniformly addressed to the Father. On this subject also the Bishop has made no reply.

Bishop Horsley had the assurance to maintain that the Unitarians do not even pretend that the general tenor of scripture is in their favour, that they cannot produce any text that plainly contains their doctrine, but that they derive it only from particular passages to which they give a figurative interpretation. This must have been advanced without reading or much thinking, it being evident to all who are the least acquainted with the writings of any Unitarians, that they constantly appeal to the general tenor of scripture, and

the plain obvious sense of it. On the contrary, we say that the Trinitarians cannot find *their* doctrine either in the general tenor of scripture, or in any clear passages of it; but that they deduce it only from particular expressions and circumstances, which when rightly explained do by no means authorize their conclusions. To this no reply has been made either by the Bishop or any other Trinitarian in this controversy. They only continue to repeat the same thing, and have recourse to the strangest and most unintelligible metaphysical jargon in support of their doctrine; and to this they are necessarily driven, while the scriptures maintain so clearly the doctrine of *one God*, and their doctrine of *three divine persons* must necessarily, according to the dictates of common sense, be that of *three Gods*.

Lastly, Bishop Horsley, with all the appearance of being in earnest, said that the difference between the Unitarians and the Mahometans was so small that there is ground to think they will soon admit the divine mission of Mahomet. He also represented unitarian christianity as inferior to deism, and when joined with materialism as highly favourable to atheism. Such charges as these, which however are perpetually urged by Trinitarian writers in this controversy, I have considered as proceeding from nothing but ignorance and malevolence, and undeserving of a serious refutation. The Bishop has not chosen to repeat them.

Such, my Lords, has been the issue of my controversy with your associate, the present Bishop of St. David's; and I appeal to all the learned world, whether any man, pretending to scholarship, ever undertook the discussion of a question of literature less prepared

for it, or acquitted himself so wretchedly in it. Such strange paradoxes as those which I have recited, I will venture to say, were never before advanced by any person who made the least pretension to a knowledge of ecclesiastical history; and yet this is the man who has voluntarily stepped forth, not as deigning to enter into a regular discussion of the question, but only to show my *incompetency in the subject*; when, to repeat his own phraseology, no man ever appeared to be more incompetent in any thing than he is in this business. There are judges of this kind of literature in Europe. Before them I deliberately advance this; and whatever be *my credit and the authority of my name*, of which he speaks preface p. 4, and which he there declares it to be his object to destroy, (and without any vanity I may say I have something more at stake in this respect than the Bishop of St. David's) I willingly risque it on the truth of this assertion.

LETTER III.

A General View of what has been done by other Writers in this Controversy in Defence of the Doctrine of the Trinity.

My Lords,

As this controversy engaged a considerable degree of attention, other persons soon appeared in defence of the doctrine which I undertook to oppugn, and among the rest *Mr. Howes*, a learned member of your church; but he appeared to be as little prepared for the discus-

sion as Bishop Horsley himself. By another prescriptive argument, more curious than that of the Bishop, he undertook to demonstrate the futility of the Unitarian doctrine, by showing that it is not more ancient than Photinus, if indeed it be truly older than Socinus. According to Mr. Howes, the Ebionites, the Nazarenes, and all those in the church or out of it, who, by all ecclesiastical historians, Trinitarians as well as others, have been considered as Unitarians, were really believers in the divinity of Christ. He proceeded half way in an attempt at a proof of his paradox, and I replied to him. Since this, some years have elapsed without hearing any thing further from him, and the remainder of his argument has not appeared.

Dr. Knowles, a Prebendary of Ely, is another champion belonging to your church in this controversy. But his performance, I imagine, will be acknowledged to be the production of zeal rather than of knowledge; his object being to prove the orthodoxy of the ancient christian writers, which I can allow him without any injury to my argument. For what I have undertaken to prove is, that the common people among christians retained the Unitarian doctrine, which they had received from the apostles, while the learned christians were misled by the principles of Platonism, of which they were great admirers, and from the three Platonic principles got the idea of three persons in the Trinity. Dr. Knowles, however, has greatly mistaken and misrepresented the opinions of the early christian writers. For, according to them, a great *superiority* was left to the Father, which is inconsistent with that *equality* which the post-Nicene fathers insisted upon, and which

is the professed doctrine of your church. This Prebendary appears also to be ignorant of the state of the ancient writings which he has quoted; not distinguishing those which are universally acknowledged to be spurious from those that are genuine.

The Dean of Canterbury *, in an early period of the controversy, besides publishing two sermons, promised a *large work* on the doctrine of the Trinity; but as it has not yet made its appearance, he must be ranked among the crowd of writers, almost without number, and altogether without name, who have stepped forth to show their zeal for the cause; but, conscious of their inability to assail with success the only argument that I have professed to maintain, viz. that which arises from the state of opinions in early times, have contented themselves with urging arguments from the *scriptures*, to which replies have been so often made that it is needless to repeat them. In the course of the controversy, however, I have not failed to notice every thing even of this kind that appeared particularly deserving of it.

In aid of the members of your church there have appeared two writers of the Catholic persuasion, superior in learning, and greatly superior in point of candour, to the Bishop of St. David's, I mean Dr. Geddes and Mr. Barnard. The former, not thinking it necessary to discuss the argument at large, thought by one prescriptive argument, as he called it, to defeat my whole object, maintaining that the decision of the Council of Nice was a sufficient proof that the faith of the primitive church was Trinitarian. But besides that the Trinity of the fathers assembled at Nice was

* Dr. Horne, afterwards Bishop of Norwich.

a very different thing from that of a later age, which has been adopted by the churches of Rome and England, I have shown by a variety of arguments, that the real opinion of the fathers who were assembled at Nice is far from being a sure guide to that of the unlearned christians even in that age, and much less in that of the apostles.

Mr. Barnard took a larger scope, but still left the most important articles of the controversy untouched. He has also made but a very weak defence of Dr. Geddes's prescriptive argument; and his ignorance of the state of ancient writings appears to be much the same with that of Dr. Knowles.

These, my Lords, are all the writers who have come to my knowledge of the established churches of England or Rome, who have controverted what I have advanced with respect to the state of opinions concerning Christ in early times. The only piece supposed to be written by a Dissenter in this branch of the controversy, is one that is entitled Primitive Candour, in which the writer does not, like Mr. Howes, deny that there were Unitarians in very early times; but he says that their tenets were considered as so much more innocent than those of the Gnostics, that they passed without censure. This I showed to be a hypothesis unsupported by fact or probability. But the piece is written with a degree of candour that does the greatest credit to the writer *.

* Dr. Benjamin Davies, then Tutor of the Dissenters' College at Homerton.

LETTER IV.

Of Subscription, and a Proposal for a Change in the Forms of Public Worship.

My Lords,

Supposing that a revolution in favour of Unitarianism should not take place, it greatly behoves your Lordships to consider how far you are partakers in the guilt of those Unitarians who, in consequence of subscriptions countenanced and enforced by you, are daily tempted to violate their consciences in complying with them. You need not be told that the immediate offender is not the only person who will be answerable for his guilt at the tribunal of God. All are more or less guilty who are voluntarily the means of drawing others into sin; and one of these means is our not removing every temptation which it is in our power to remove to the commission of sin. In like manner we are chargeable with all evils of any other kind that we are the means of bringing upon others.

Not only, therefore, are your Lordships answerable to God for every temporal inconvenience incurred by those worthy clergymen who have resigned their livings, or who have been prevented from entering the church, and for the want of the useful services which they would have rendered it, but for the much greater evil (viz. evil of a moral nature) both of those who have subscribed when they knew that they did wrong in so doing, and of those who, by any improper consideration, have persuaded themselves that they might safely subscribe, when, strictly and honestly

speaking, they ought not to have done it. And in this latter predicament I scruple not to say are all those who profess that they subscribed the articles not because they really believed them, but because they thought, or had been led to think, that on some other principle, be it what it will, whether that lately advanced by Mr. Paley or any other, they might lawfully, *i. e.* legally, subscribe without believing them. And how great is the number of those clergymen, in other respects worthy and honest, who are in this situation, cannot be altogether unknown to your Lordships.

It is, my Lords, a disgrace to this country and to human nature, that men should on any pretence whatever subscribe to what they do not believe. It is perhaps the greatest article in the account of our national guilt, and consequently that which threatens us with the heaviest of God's judgements. But this guilt is yours, if by your means the cause of it might be removed, and it be not removed. And can it be doubted but that, if your Lordships joined in remonstrance to Government on the subject, this great evil, with all its consequences, natural and moral, would be removed, and without delay?

You may say, that, as sincere believers in the truth and importance of the doctrine of the Trinity, you think it your duty to maintain it at all events. But, without inquiring into the foundation of this your firm faith, or questioning you about the seriousness and impartiality of your inquiries, I would now observe, that what we have to propose is not to prevent the serious belief of that or of any other doctrine, but only to remove every temptation to profess a belief of what is

not really believed. To continue such a temptation as this cannot surely be for the credit of the doctrine of the Trinity, or your own; as it implies a suspicion that, without this additional motive, which is independent of all evidence of its truth, the very profession of this belief might cease.

When this great temptation to insincerity is removed, all men will still believe as they see reason; and this is what all your restrictions cannot prevent. But it is certainly desirable that public institutions should be calculated to favour *sincerity* as well as *truth*. With respect to the latter, men will think differently; but all men know what is common honesty, sincerity, or integrity. All likewise agree in acknowledging the *value* of it, and also that the public teachers of religion and morality should set others an example of the strictest adherence to it.

Now this greatest of all points will be secured by expunging from your public creeds, and the public offices of your religion, whatever shall imply a belief in any doctrine to which a serious christian may object. When this is done, all men may still believe the doctrine of the Trinity if they think there is sufficient evidence for it, and if they please they may introduce it in their private devotions; only in public let them content themselves with such services as all their fellow christians may join in.

Besides, nothing is more evident than that all the provision you make to secure uniformity of doctrine within your church, and especially the real belief of the doctrine of the Trinity, does not answer the end. It only produces refinements in sophistical casuistry. On some pretence or other very different opinions are

well known to be held, and are even openly contended for, by the members of your communion; persons who subscribed all your articles, and who join in the habitual use of your trinitarian liturgy. Lady Moyer's Lecture was established for the sole purpose of inculcating the doctrine of the Trinity; and yet one of her lecturers, Dr. Benjamin Dawson, in his sermons on that very occasion, preached nothing but Socinianism under another name. The discourses are before the public, and may at any time be examined.

A very ingenious defence of Arianism was written by another member of your church, the Rev. Mr. Hopkins, lately deceased, entitled An Appeal to Common Sense. And there is no doubt of Dr. Clarke, Dr. Jortin, and Mr. Jackson, with many other learned and respectable members of your church, as well as Mr. Whiston, who honestly left the church on that account, and as Mr. Peirce, Mr. Emlyn, and Dr. Benson, among the dissenters, having entertained the same opinion. It is also well known that the majority of the learned clergy are professed Arminians, though the compilers of the articles, and great numbers of the more zealous of the clergy, are Calvinists. And to my certain knowledge there have been unbelievers among your clergy as well as among those of the church of Rome. It is not therefore uniformity of faith, but a system of hypocrisy, that is supported by your subscriptions. If then you be the friends of sincerity and truth, you will not hesitate to abolish them, especially in universities, where they ensnare and seduce the unwary and the uninformed.

That an agreement of Unitarians and Trinitarians in the public forms of worship is really practicable, and

even not liable to much objection, is evident from the actual construction of by far the greater part of your public offices. For in them there are addresses to God the Father only. Consequently, if those prayers to which Unitarians now object were altered, so as to make them of a piece with the rest, and by this means the whole service were made uniform, it could not give any just cause of offence to those who now approve the greatest part of it*.

If this alteration were made, all the prayers in the liturgy would be addressed to the one true God, and in the use of these prayers Trinitarians might certainly join, because they now do actually join in such prayers; mentally conceiving, if they please, and as I suppose they now do, that in this one God there are three persons; while the Unitarians could use the same form of words without any such ideas. If this *one God* was uniformly addressed by the appellation of *Father*, it it is what no Trinitarian could reasonably object to; because it is the style in which the greater part of the prayers of the church are now drawn up, and to which he has of course been most accustomed.

We Unitarians should never exclude you from joining in our devotions, because we should not use any language that you could not adopt; but your Trinitarian forms absolutely exclude us. If, therefore, there be any sin in *schism*, it lies wholly at your door; because it is you who force us to separate ourselves, when, without any violation of your consciences, you might admit us to join with you. What then is there

* It is a remarkable circumstance, that in the first part of the liturgy there is no appearance of Trinitarianism. No Trinitarian doxology. *Qu.* Was not this the most early composed?

unreasonable in our demands, when you might grant them in their utmost extent without the least injury to yourselves? Thus the *unity of the church*, and the *extinction of all sects*, which is your own favourite object, depend entirely upon yourselves; and the acquisition would cost you nothing.

How glorious, my Lords, would it be to the heads of any christian establishment to require nothing of the members of it besides the profession of our *common christianity*, and to leave all particular opinions to every man's own conscience! Every cause of unpleasing contention would then be removed, and one of the most popular objections to christianity would be removed with it, viz. the want of harmony among christians. We should then meet as brethren, and the disciples of one common master; and with respect to all our differences, having no object but *truth*, they would be discussed without animosity. No opinion having then any thing in its favour besides its own proper evidence, all prejudice would much sooner give way; and truth, which we all profess to aim at, would be much sooner attained, and become universal.

But the honour of producing so great and glorious a revolution is, I believe, too great for any powers, civil or ecclesiastical, that will be able to effect it. It is a scheme worthy of God only, and which in due time will be brought about by his good providence, contrary to the wishes of all the ruling powers of the world, or of those who direct their councils. In the mean time, we Unitarians shall not fail to do every thing in our power to exhibit these enlarged views of things; confident that in this we are the instruments in the hands of providence; that our principles, being

frequently exposed to view, will in time recommend themselves to all who are truly liberal and unprejudiced; and that all bigotry, like the darkness which it resembles, will at length give way before the light of truth.

With this glorious prospect before us, we willingly bear all the obloquy and every temporal inconvenience to which the open profession of our faith can expose us, and are infinitely happier in being opposed and frowned upon by the powers of the world, than you are in opposing us, with every advantage that the world can give you. Your associate says that my History of early Opinions concerning Christ appears by its title to be *fraught with impious heretical theology;* but such language only serves to amuse myself and friends, who, in *the way which you call heresy, conscientiously worship the God of our fathers;* and what you think to be most reproachful we consider as highly honourable to us.

THE END.

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